

# SHOCK CINEMA

Number 43

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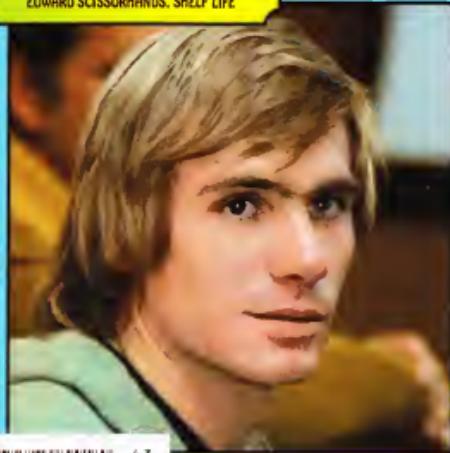
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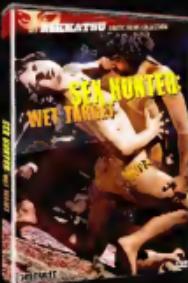
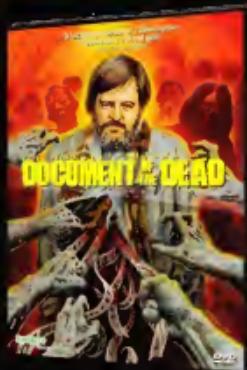
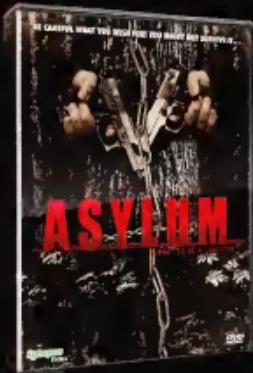
EDWARD SCISSORHANDS, SHELF LIFE



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For the longest time, I've griped about wanting a break from all of my work. I was sick of spending most of my day hunched over a computer keyboard. Well, be careful what you wish for, folks, because Hurricane Sandy wasn't exactly the vacation I'd envisioned. In fact, much of this editorial was written in a decidedly low-tech manner — with pen and paper, by candlelight! Of course, that wasn't by choice. I was simply trapped in the aftermath of this superstorm, which battered the East Coast, outing power in over eight million homes, and left most of Jersey City and below-34th Street Manhattan in the dark. I had already written the editorial for this issue, but as we approached the 100-hours-without-electricity mark, I decided to rip out the old version, start over from a fresh perspective and transcribe my longhand notes once the power was back up. Besides, my original editorial assumed we'd be at the printer just before the Presidential election; now that we're running late, it seemed silly to print a rant about an upcoming election that was now over... In the end, we were hunkered down in our apartment, without electricity and heat, for nearly five days — from Monday to Saturday — with the temperature dipping into the 40's at night. Meanwhile, our primary source of news was an old battery-powered radio that kept us perpetually nauseous with stories of people suffering around the Tri-State area, five-hour lines at the handful of open gas stations and seemingly-endless power company excuses for this debacle. Anna and I also received text messages from concerned family, but they were either too far away for us to easily drive or were also stuck in the dark, and (unlike so many other gobsmed residents) we resisted the urge to waste precious gasoline by driving around the area searching in vain for supplies, since the supermarkets were shattered, streets were blocked due to flooding and downed trees, all of the traffic lights were out, plus there was a 7 p.m. curfew. The region was fucked. Anna and I certainly weren't the worst off though. We were safe, at home and together. We had water, a working stove, a fridge that stayed icy for the first three days, plus lots of canned non-perishables. We also had a cat that was thrilled with all of the extra attention, as well as finally finding a use for all of the gothy black candles we'd had stashed about our apartment for years. By the fourth evening, we were even so desperate that we reluctantly broke out a huge, stinky pineapple-cilantro scented candle that Anna once received as a gift and was too horrified to ever actually light. Hey, it was better than eating dinner in the dark. Without the usual time-killing modern conveniences at our disposal, it was hard not to get a bit stir crazy at times ("Reading an actual book? What is this, the 1980's?"), plus there was my own personal frustration at having 99% of this issue finished and unable to do a damned thing with it. On top of that, it either our printer or paper distributor (who were both in the path of the storm) was soaked too badly, the whole issue might be in jeopardy. Then again, those were rather petty worries when compared to the overall destruction and chaos wrought by this hurricane... Things have improved gradually in the days since the power returned, and hopefully our backlogged printing plant will be able to expedite this issue. But a lot of others are still suffering in the dark, even now. If you were personally impacted by the storm, or have friends and family who were, I hope everyone got through it safely.

I also wanted to quickly mention how cool it was to learn that THE VILLAGE VOICE, in their annual "Best of New York City" issue, picked 'n old SHOCK CINEMA as "Best Local Movie Magazine". Admittedly, there aren't a lot of honest-to-goodness, tree-killing film mags around anymore, but it was still a blast to be recognized by the VV staff. Finally, since this issue is now going to the printer three days after the election, I need to say how relieved I am that a majority of the nation wasn't conned into voting against their own interests and a gradually improving economy, in favor of the same failed, clueless policies that screwed us over in the first place. I'm certain nothing will stop the batshit insanity from fringe-right loonies and Karl Rove-style political operatives (who somehow earn a fortune out of being consistently wrong), but hopefully Obama's win will help puncture the Republican Party's epistemic bubble, which has them ignoring any facts that deviate from their own myopic mindset, regularly misinformed by fair and balanced news outlets, and never having the guts to tell any nutjob within their own party to "Shut the fuck up, You're an idiot." Both Obama and Romney have discussed the need to now reach across the aisle and work together. Hopefully the goddamn-addicted dipshits in Congress listen to them, get their asses in gear and start solving our problems. 11/9/2012

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**Special thanks:** Mike Decker, Jonathan Bloom, Shade Rupe, Michael Little, Chirs Poggiali, John Szpunar, Lisa Petrucci, Keith Crocker. Cover photos [Clockwise from top]:

Chris Elliott in CABIN BOY. Bruce Davison in the television series HUNTER, Steve Railsback in THE STUNT MAN.



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# GETTING TO KNOW THE GUY WITH THE BEARD: An Interview with **CHRIS ELLIOTT**

By MIKE SULLIVAN

To the public, Chris Elliott is best known for his "cocky idiot" persona, someone who — as WFMU d.j. Tom Scharping once noted — was always "burning through cloud he really didn't have." But in private, Elliott is a completely different person. In spite of the fact that he — along with his frequent collaborator, Adam Resnick — could be considered the architects of today's alternative comedy movement, Elliott remains a grounded, warm and giving individual who cheerfully endured my increasingly obsessive and frequently nerdy line of questioning.

Son of comedy great Bob Elliott, Chris went from being a tour guide at NBC studios to a writer/performer on *LATE NIGHT WITH DAVID LETTERMAN*, one of NBC's most groundbreaking programs of the '80s. After giving life to such classic *LATE NIGHT* characters as The Fugitive Guy, an unhinged Marlon Brando, and Skylerk the Chris Elliott impersonator, Elliott went on to delight and occasionally distract audiences with his memorable turns in *THE ABYSS* (1989), *MANHUNTER* (1986) and *NEW YORK STORIES* (1989). From there, Elliott secured his place in comedy history by co-creating and starring in such enduring cult classics as TV's *GET A LIFE* (1990) and the wildly underated *CABIN BOY* (1994).

Still too young to be dubbed an elder-statesman of comedy, Elliott's influence can be seen in everything from the sitcom *COMMUNITY* to the entire *Adult Swim* line-up on the Cartoon Network (where his show *EAGLEHEART* fits right in) to even the elaborate comedy routines of Tom Scharping and Jon Wurster. As a fan of Elliott's, it was an honor and a privilege to talk to him about his incredible career as well as the delicious power of hushpuppies, Tim Burton's irrational hatred of short-pants and the awkwardness of performing *EQUUS* in a small conservative town.

**SHOCK CINEMA:** I saw you on *Letterman* last night. You were really funny.

Chris Elliott: Thanks! I can never tell. I never watch myself. I tend to move on pretty quickly after I do something like that, so it's hard to tell.

**SC:** Is that a recent development? Have you never watched your appearances on *Letterman*?

Elliott: No. I never made a habit of watching them, but the few times I did, it was really helpful. It made me see what I should be doing or what I shouldn't be doing. But it's a kind of painful process for me to do. I could watch *GET A LIFE* because it was scripted, but I can't watch myself when I'm doing something a little more free-form like a talk show.

**SC:** Did you at least watch yourself when you started doing bits on *Letterman*?

Elliott: No. Right from the beginning I wouldn't watch myself and I never told anyone when I was on, either. Of course, I've seen myself. I've seen clips and caught myself here and there on televis-

sion but I've never made a habit of watching it. If my wife wanted to watch it I'd go into the other room.

**SC:** Wow! That's surprising!

Elliott: Why? I think a lot of people are like that, aren't they?



**SC:** I'm not. But I'm kind of self-absorbed.

Elliott: Well, I am too. I'm definitely self-absorbed, otherwise I wouldn't be in this business. But I also live in fear of — believe it or not — humiliation. Everything that I do is humiliating even though I've made a living doing it. It's too painful reliving it.

**SC:** I'd like to talk about your first film, *John Sayles' LIANNA* (1983). My editor has a publicity still of you from the film and it looks like you're about 18 in the picture.

Elliott: I think I was 17 when I did it. Believe it or not, I started doing summer stock theater when I was 15 and I did it for a few summers. I can remember one summer — I was working at this outdoor theater in North Carolina called The Lost Colony. They had this little apprentice theatrical program after the show and every two weeks the apprentices would put on a show. They actually put on *EQUUS* and I was the lead in that. There's a lot of nudity in *EQUUS* and it was kind of a conservative town, so we had to perform it in our underwear.

**SC:** That sounds like a *LATE NIGHT* bit. Were you performing *EQUUS* in your tighty whities?

Elliott: Yeah, and it wasn't even flesh-toned tighty whities to give you the impression of being nude. It was an outdoor thing and I think they were worried that children could be hiding in the woods watching. But anyway, getting back to *LIANNA*, one of the theatres was in North Conway, New Hampshire and John Sayles was up there directing a play that summer and in the fall he was doing *LIANNA*. I was friends with the group Sayles was friends with. As a favor to me, I guess, he called and asked me if I wanted to play a guy in this. So I went out to Hoboken and shot it. I remember going on *Letterman* to promote it.

**SC:** Did you always want to get into comedy? Or do you want to be a dramatic actor initially?

Elliott: Yeah. I think initially that's probably what I thought I wanted to do. I wasn't really keen on becoming an actor, per se, I did not go to college. I went to the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut. My dad helped pull some strings to get me in there because I think it's mostly for college kids or whatever. It was there where I started to get into writing. I liked writing dramatic scenes. But I really didn't know what I wanted to do. There was a time when I thought I wanted to be a scenes designer because I liked drawing, but I didn't have the sort of technical know-how to handle it.

It wasn't until I was making stuff up as a tour guide at Rockefeller Center that I started to realize that maybe I could do something comedy wise. After that I met a producer who knew Barry Sonnenfeld [the soon-to-be producer of *LATE NIGHT WITH DAVID LETTERMAN*] and he got me an interview.

**SC:** It's interesting looking at your early career because you did a lot of serious films like *THE ABYSS* and *MANHUNTER*. How did those come about? Were the filmmakers aware of your bits on *LATE NIGHT*?

Elliott: I've always wondered about that. I think that some casting person at the time was looking for somebody interesting or somebody who was getting a little heat. And at that point, *LATE NIGHT* was pretty hot. I was in *People* magazine and David was getting a lot of press and I think that these people in casting would tell their directors that it would be good if you put so-and-so into your movie because he's on *Letterman* or whatever.

I did audition for *THE ABYSS*. I read for James Cameron and Gale Anne Hurd but I was reading for Todd Graff's role [Alan "Hippy" Caines]. James Cameron liked me but I didn't get the part. Shortly after that, I got a call that he wanted me to come down to North Carolina. When I got down there, I found out that he was writing a role for me as he was filming. He was sitting there in his director's chair with a legal pad and he would hand me the lines before I would do the scene.

**SC:** It sounds like Cameron really liked you.

Elliott: He did seem to like me. He was kind of an ogre to everyone else on the set but he really took a shine to me. I remember when we were shooting that final scene in THE ABYSS where everyone is watching the alien ship emerge from out of the water, Cameron told everyone to do something different. All the other actors were trying to act scared and I remember doing an impersonation of Melinda Dillon in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. I just kind of half-cried, held my hands up and giggled at the spaceship like she does at the end of the movie. It was mostly for my own amusement but when James Cameron yelled cut, my reaction was the only one he singled out and complimented.

**SC:** Didn't you have a kind of falling out with James Cameron?

Elliott: I don't think I had a falling out with him. I didn't know him that well to have a falling out with him. I think that my naivete in terms of other people's senses of humor about themselves had some impact on him in some way. The night before he came on LATE NIGHT to promote THE ABYSS, my wife and I were invited to the screening at Radio City Music Hall. We were seated behind James Cameron and Gale Anne Hurd. When my face came on screen there was a smattering of applause and Cameron turned around and shook my hand. The next day he told me that in some of the test screenings some people wrote that they wanted to see more of Chris Elliott in the movie. So, he did like me.

But then the night he was on, I thought it would be funny if I came out first and promoted me being in THE ABYSS which was in line with what I had been doing on LATE NIGHT. So I came out, talked about being in this movie and told Dave I had a clip from THE ABYSS. We ran this pre-tape of Gerry Mulligan and I in silly looking wet suits, sitting on folding chairs and saying things like, "Help us! We're in the Abyss! It's really dark down here". We just made it look as lame

**SC:** I do agree with you. It was just a joke. He shouldn't have taken it so seriously.

Elliott: Well, this is conjecture on my part. It's coming from somebody who told me Cameron didn't find it amusing. I just assumed I wasn't his cup of tea anymore. It's just me looking back and saying, "That was stupid. I shouldn't have done that."

but we were pitching ideas and it was pretty much ad-libbed, all the way. The first A.D. basically set up the scene while Woody Allen was off-camera sitting on a sofa and reading the newspaper in this office set. But as soon as we started doing some takes, Woody would come in and give us some comments here and there.



With William Peterson and Bill Smitrovich in MANHUNTER

**SC:** What was it like working with Francis Ford Coppola on NEW YORK STORIES?

Elliott: The GODFATHER movies sort of changed my life. My writing partner Adam [Resnick] and I were just huge fans of those movies. But when I did NEW YORK STORIES, I was at a point where I didn't really consider myself an actor. At the night of the shoot, I showed up at six but there were some technical difficulties and they didn't shoot my scene until two in the morning, which is par for the course, but I wasn't used to that and I had to go to work in the morning at Letterman. At two in

the morning they shot part of this scene I was in.

Now to preface this, Adam had been joking with me that Coppola isn't going to know who I am and he's going to call me, "The guy with the beard". So, at two in the morning we did this wide shot where I come into this hotel holding a gun and while Coppola retouched the scene, I heard him say, "[Chris performs an eerie impression of Coppola] And then the guy with the beard comes over!"

When they shot the scene and let us go for the night I remember calling my agent and telling him, "I won't be back on that set." But that lasted about four hours and after threats of lawsuits, I had to come back and do the scene. Coppola at that point knew who I was. He wasn't calling me "The Guy with the Beard" after that. I was clearly inexperienced on proper film set etiquette. It didn't occur to me that I was burning bridges.

**SC:** Speaking of NEW YORK STORIES, you've worked with Woody Allen as well. What was your experience like on the set of RADIO CITY? (1987)?

Elliott: I was playing one of many radio comedy writers and we were in a scene with Mia Farrow. I can't remember what the gist of the scene was

At one point during the scene somebody threw an idea out and I remember ad-libbing, "Oh, c'mon, that's dullsville" [laughs] which is more of a beatnik kind of phrase. Woody Allen came up to me afterwards and told me, "Maybe 'dullsville' isn't the right period." [laughs] I remembered being very embarrassed by that. Eventually, the whole scene was cut out of the movie but I received a nice letter from Woody that I've still got.

**SC:** What did he write in the letter?

Elliott: He hoped I wouldn't become an alcoholic now that my scene was cut from the movie. [laughs] I appreciated it, I don't know if he does it to everybody that was cut out of one of his movies. Maybe he doesn't.

**SC:** Was it a formal letter or did he personally write it to you?

Elliott: No, it was written to me but it was only a couple of sentences.

**SC:** How did you get involved in MANHUNTER? Was Michael Mann familiar with your bits on LATE NIGHT?

Elliott: I don't think Michael Mann really knew who I was. I met a casting director from MANHUNTER and she asked me about this role she had in mind for me. I've done this in other auditions, but I tried to talk her out of casting me. I told her the role seems better suited to Bob Balaban than me. So instead, they offered me a small role as an FBI agent but I didn't look like an FBI agent. I had this huge beard and I was really worried that Michael Mann was going to make me shave. But Michael said, "This is the new FBI. I think he should keep his beard. But he should clean up a little bit." So I had to shave my neck and I didn't even know how to shave a beard. I had all of these cuts on my neck that had to be covered in makeup for that one scene.

I do remember seeing MANHUNTER in a movie theatre and — this was somewhat the case of THE ABYSS, too — when they pan down this table of forensic scientists and it finally hits on this 22-year-old idiot with a big beard, there were chuckles from the audience. [laughs] I sure wish Michael Mann is not happy I kind of broke the tension of that movie.



Linda Griffiths and Chris Elliott in LIANNA

as possible, which is what I always did. The audience was laughing, Dave was laughing but I found out afterwards that James Cameron wasn't laughing. He was just kind of staring at the TV in the Green Room seething. I assume it didn't really dawn on me that it was kind of a shitty thing for me to do. It never really occurred to me that people actually work hard on their projects and they have to come out and present them on national television. He had to follow me and seriously promote THE ABYSS. So I felt bad about that but, on the other hand, it was a joke and if you know LATE NIGHT and if you know me then, I think, you would assume that thing would happen.

**SC:** What's funny about that is that it's basically what you used to do on Letterman only now it's happening in real life.

Elliott: In the back of my mind whenever I did these kinds of roles, I used to think it would make good material for a bit on LATE NIGHT. And I did do a bit on all of these things like MANHUNTER and THE EQUALIZER. I was making fun of the fact that I was "starting to catch on."

It's a cliché to say that dying is easy and comedy's hard, but I do enjoy appearing in dramas because I don't have to worry about getting a laugh. I don't want to say that drama is an easy job for me, because it isn't, but it does carry a different set of challenges.

**SC:** I guess it's a little less stressful.

Elliott: It is for me when I do it. The pressure does come off. People do go a little easier on you if you're a comedy actor because they know your expertise isn't drama.

**SC:** How did HYPERSPACE (1984) come about?

Elliott: [HYPERSPACE director] Todd Durham was a huge fan of everything I've done on LATE NIGHT and he asked me if I would be in this film he was putting together. At the time, it was so early in my career to be asked to be in a movie that I was like, "Sure, absolutely!" I've never seen the movie, but I remember having a lot of fun doing it. It felt like I was in show business when I did that movie. I know that when SPACEBALLS came out I remember thinking, "We did funnier shit in HYPERSPACE."

**SC:** What I think is interesting about HYPERSPACE is that for a good majority of the film you're playing your character completely straight. But as the film progresses, your character slowly takes on your LATE NIGHT persona.

Elliott: I honestly don't remember much about that film. I remember doing some scene where I'm in a radio station and the only reason I remember that is because it was the first time I ever had hush-puppies for dinner. Basically, if I can remember the food then I can remember what I did.

**SC:** Was ACTION FAMILY (1986) originally intended to be a Fugitive Guy special? It shared the same writers [Matt Wickline and Sandy Frank] as well as a similar satirical target [Quinn Martin Productions].

Elliott: No. I had the idea of combining a MANNIX-type show with a PARTRIDGE FAMILY-type show. At the time, nobody had done that kind of thing. Cinemax really liked the idea because back then most of their "Comedy Experiments" were just stand-up specials.

Juli Roberts was going to come in to play my daughter and there was some reason why she didn't get the role. I think she missed her train or something.

**SC:** Marv Albert appears in your second Cinemax project, FDR: A ONE MAN SHOW (1987). Was he a fan of your impression of him?

Elliott: He loved it. That impersonation was really more of the Marv Albert you see in the NBC hallways. He always carried around a Styrofoam coffee cup and he was always flicking the lint off of



Chris Elliott and the cast of CABIN BOY

his trousers as he walked. That's how I used to make my entrance when I did Marv and it always made Dave laugh. Marv was always really sweet. I remember a couple of times he asked me if I wanted to get some dinner with him. After news of that scandal surfaced, I wonder what those nights would've been like.

Everybody I did on the show was complimentary. Even Morton Downey Jr. He actually asked me to pull back a little bit on the warts.

**SC:** I really want to talk about CABIN BOY. I'm a huge fan of it. I've talked to director Adam Resnick in the past about the film and I think he's way too hard on himself. It's a great cult film.

Elliott: He's hard on himself because CABIN BOY was really just dropped in his lap and he did not have much help on that movie. Once Tim Burton decided he didn't want to direct, the budget was slashed. What Adam did in that film is amazing. I think he is the most brilliant writer I know. The directing is fine. I think I was the problem in that movie.

**SC:** No! I don't think so! When I interviewed Adam, I told him I always liked that foppish accent you do in the movie. I think it's very funny.

Elliott: It was obviously a nod to Freddie Bartholomew in CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS. But I think to have to listen to me doing that throughout the entire movie was probably a bad choice on my part. The producers asked me at one point if I really wanted to do the accent. They also tried to talk me out of wearing shorts.

**SC:** What?!

Elliott: Yeah. Tim Burton tried to talk me out of wearing shorts. That was his big contribution to developing my character. But I was too stubborn to take his advice. I'm proud of CABIN BOY and I stand by it. I think the movie itself is really goofy and funny. A few years ago, I did a screening in Boston and it was the first time I heard people laughing at that movie. It's gratifying to hear because I remember going to the cast and crew screening and it was frighteningly quiet. Adam and I are still mystified as to why it was so vilified.

After CABIN BOY, the phone just stopped ringing for Adam and we ended it was frightening.

**SC:** Good comedy can often be polarizing. CABIN BOY was very much ahead of its time and people just didn't know how to react to it.

Elliott: I think the movie has grown on people. It has this following now that I never anticipated. I thought it was going to come and go, but Dave sort of kept it alive by joking about it on his show.

**SC:** What was it like on the set?

Elliott: It was a grueling shoot, especially towards the end. The film was on a really tight budget and we were trying to do special effects with a first-time director. On the last day of shooting we shot for almost 24 hours straight. We were afraid the studio was going to pull the plug if we went over another day because we were already five days behind schedule.

I can remember leaving the set each day and not really knowing if I've done anything funny. I left each day just thinking, "Well, I'll make it better tomorrow." But I also think I had a feeling that it was going to be OK. I can remember being on the set and talking about what we were going to do for CABIN BOY 2. We thought Nathaniel could take a journey to the center of the Earth or do an AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS type thing on a hot air balloon.



Elliott and David Letterman in CABIN BOY

**SC:** I understand that on the set of CABIN BOY you were offered a role in DUMB AND DUMBER (1995). Could you talk a little about that?

Elliott: Yeah. The script was left for me in my trailer with a really nice letter from the Farrellys that basically said we're really big fans and we'd love if you played one of the leads. I read a page or two and I got to a line that read, "No smelling of hineys" and I just closed the script, put it aside and said, "I don't think so!" I think I gave it to Andy Richter and told him, "This might be good for you." I was thinking that I was going to do CABIN BOY 2, 3 and 4, but CABIN BOY did not do well and suddenly I'm calling the Farrellys and asking, "Hey, what's happening with that script?" I think at that point Jim Carrey was already involved with it and I had to go in and read. I went in three times with Jim Carrey but they ended up with Flap from TERMS OF ENDEARMENT.

**SC:** I would have loved to have seen you in *DUMB AND DUMBER*.

Elliott: I don't know. I don't think I could have done what Jeff Daniels did in it. Actually, I'm not sure if working with Jim Carrey would have been a good match, to be honest with you. I think our styles are different. I'm not sure I could have been that broad. Even though the Farrellys were huge fans of mine I think they saw that it probably wasn't the right mix.



Randy Quaid, Chris Elliott and Woody Harrelson in *KINGPIN*

**SC:** It did forge a relationship with the Farrellys. You did pop up in a lot of their movies.

Elliott: Yeah. They didn't forget me. Their next film was *KINGPIN* (1996) and they offered the Ernie McCracken role to Bill Murray, but they weren't sure if he was going to do it, so they offered me the role if Bill turned them down. But then Murray decided to read it. So the Farrellys asked me if I could do a cameo in the casino scene and I said, sure. I was back at *LATE NIGHT* at the time doing bits once every two weeks or so and the Farrellys actually flew me out in a private jet to Reno for one night to shoot my scene. They flew me back the next day so I could get back to work at *LATE NIGHT*.

**SC:** I've heard that you came up with giving your character those disgusting bolts in *THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY* (1998).

Elliott: I did. Peter [Farrelly] came up with the sty on my eye. But I suggested that, as the movie progresses, I should break out until I'm covered with rashes at the end. Honestly, it wasn't like my character needed that at all but I was just so blown away by that script, I wanted to bring something to it. I also like to put on hideous make-up. That may partly stem from being a little insecure as a performer and wanting to hide behind a gimmick, but that seemed to work in *THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY*.

**SC:** Did you improvise that gag where you stole Mary's shoes? Or was that in the script?

Elliott: The shoes were in the script. I don't think it was in the script when I put one in my mouth though. It was just one take and they put it in the movie.

**SC:** Did you audition for *GROUNDHOG DAY* (1993)?

Elliott: I auditioned for that but I did not do well at the audition. I'm not good at auditioning. I tried out for the role of Ned and I was all over the map. I didn't know what to do with that. But they did offer me the cameraman role and I took it.

**SC:** Did you meet Bill Murray before you did *GROUNDHOG DAY*?

Elliott: I auditioned for Bob Goldthwait's role in *SCROOGED* (1988) and Bill came in while I was waiting to read. He sat down and talked to me about my Brando and some other stuff I did that he thought was funny.

**SC:** So he was familiar with your work then?

Elliott: He knew it, yes. He was always really nice to me. The first time I actually saw Bill Murray, I was trying to be an extra on *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*. I was 19 and my dad got me an interview with Lorne Michaels. I remember waiting in Studio 8H for hours to see Lorne. While I was waiting, I watched the cast of SNL rehearse a show and all through the rehearsal you kept hearing, "Has anyone seen Bill Murray?" over the P.A. system. Now I may be romanticizing this, but my memory of this is that the elevator doors opened and Bill came out with two women who were basically holding him up because he seemed completely bombed. He stumbled over to his mark, rehearsed his bit perfectly and then stumbled out of the studio.

**SC:** What was the meeting like with Lorne Michaels?

Elliott: I had to wait a long time. He's notorious for keeping people waiting. I was ushered up to his studio office and the room was filled with people.

Gilda Radner and Laraine Newman were in there and nobody

said a word to me. So I sat down and we all sang Happy Birthday to his assistant. After a while there was this lull and Lorne

asked, "So, Chris what can we do for you?" And I said, "I'd love to do some extra work on the show if there's anything available."

And he said, "Well, that seems possible. We'll give your name to Jean Doumanian and we'll give you a call." That was basically it, so I got up and left. I was amazed I had gotten that far into the building.

I remember prepping for the meeting and trying to look hip. I borrowed this Goodyear windbreaker from my dad and I wore it with a Hawaiian shirt. I was trying to look like I belonged but I was just this 19-year-old punk.

**SC:** Did you run into Michael O'Donoghue?

Elliott: It's interesting. We were supposed to have lunch a week after he passed away. We talked on the phone a couple of times and we were thinking about doing a project together. He was always really nice to me. Those people on SNL always seemed to support me. I don't know why I guess they assumed I would at one point try to do my stuff on *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*, which was my intent when I interviewed for Dave's show. Al Franken was always supportive of me. Chevy Chase was too.

**SC:** Wow!

Elliott: Chevy was always nice to me. Whenever he did Letterman, he'd always compliment me and tell

me to take my act on the road.

**SC:** That's incredible! Every time I hear a story about Chevy Chase, it's negative.

Elliott: I know. I hear the same thing and my experience with him has always been the opposite. We did *SNOW DAY* (2000) together and he was really sweet to me then, too.

**SC:** Now, did you have an open invitation to be a SNL cast member?

Elliott: I never had an open invitation. There was a period during *LATE NIGHT* when I auditioned for it and was invited to join, but I didn't. I thought better of it at that moment. I was just getting my own little spotlight on *LATE NIGHT* and Dave was mentioning my name every night. It didn't feel like the right moment to go. But after *CABIN BOY* opened, it felt like the right moment to go.

**SC:** That was a weird season. Wasn't Michael McKean a cast member at that point?

Elliott: Yeah. You're right! I realized the first night I was there that I waited too long to be a cast member. The idea of being competitive or putting your material up against someone else's material was really alien to me. That did not happen at Letterman. I had my own niche there and everything I did after was always my own thing. Competing didn't seem right to me. I didn't know how to do it, to be honest.

**SC:** I had heard an interview with David Cross and he described the atmosphere at *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE* as poisonous. Do you think there's any truth to that?

Elliott: I think for some people it is. My daughter is there right now and I know she has good days and



With Ben Stiller in *THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY*

bad. It's a tough show, it's a tough process. It should be your first real job out of the gate because you need to have that will power and energy. You can't let things get to you there, otherwise you're sort of doomed. With Abby being there and having looked at it again through different eyes, I realize that the process does work and has worked for all these years. It's still a great show.

**SC:** I always thought you were far too established to be a cast member on *SNL*.

Elliott: Lorne Michaels once called me an anti-performer. It was pretty accurate because I was always making fun of myself as a performer. It

was always a running theme in everything I've done and you can't do that on SNL in general. My stuff at Letterman was always more conceptual. I was always banking on people knowing that I was an unbalanced staff member who desperately wanted to be famous. I was a little bit like Andrew Robinson in *DIRTY HARRY*, if he wanted to be a comedian. I still feel like that's the core of my act.

**SC:** I've got to ask about THOMAS KINKADE'S CHRISTMAS COTTAGE (2008). How did that one come about? You're very good in it by the way. You play your character in a way that's so funny yet so poignant.

Elliott: Thank you. That's so nice. I think you're being sincere and I appreciate it. I do have a general rule that I don't turn down anything that's offered to me. There are times when I have but it's usually because of a scheduling thing or it's something that is so horrible I can't see myself doing it. In general, if someone is a fan — and the director [Michael Campus] on *CHRISTMAS COTTAGE* was a fan — and they ask for me specifically, if I can I'll do it.

**SC:** What was it like working with the director of *THE MACK*?

Elliott: Michael was a very lovely man. He was from a slightly different generation than me and yet he knew who I was and was very supportive. It was a fun shoot. It did definitely fall into that category of, "Well they're offering it to me, I'll do it." [laughs] but once I got on the set and met Michael, I really started to enjoy myself.



Elliott and Andie MacDowell in GROUNDHOG DAY

**SC:** Was Campus totally sincere about the subject matter? Because there are times in the movie where it seems like he's sending up Thomas Kinkade a little bit.

Elliott: Kinkade was on the set and he had a small part in it too. So, my feeling was that he was totally sincere. Michael was looking at this as a warm-hearted family story and I think he felt that in his heart. I'm not sure how you could've done that movie and be cynical about it too. I mean, I certainly was. I was thinking, "Why am I doing this," while I was doing it. But at the same time I had to commit to the role.

**SC:** I thought Campus was doing what Frank Perry did in *MOMMIE DEAREST*, in that he

was adapting the material but also making fun of it at the same time.

Elliott: If that was the case, then it was a brilliant movie. [laughs]

**SC:** What could we have expected if your semi-autobiographical comedy pilot *YOU'VE REACHED THE ELLIOTTS* (2006) went to series?

Elliott: I was going to play a dad living in Connecticut with his wife and two children, but he was going to be a Chris Petersen sort of dad. Basically, I was attempting to combine GET A LIFE with something more mainstream. The people at the networks may have been fans of GET A LIFE but they didn't want me to do the same kind of show. They wanted something that could appeal to a broader audience and *YOU'VE REACHED THE ELLIOTTS* was the closest I ever got to that. Pam Fryman directed it and I thought it came out pretty good.

**SC:** Was your daughter Abby on the show?

Elliott: Oddly enough, Abby auditioned to be my daughter but the network didn't see it. She wound up playing the friend of my daughter on the show.

**SC:** Wow, that's weird.

Elliott: Yeah. That's show business. Adam and I are still mystified by the business and what our position is in the business. I appreciate people being huge fans of mine but I don't see it. [laughs] I'm not being humble and I'm not being hard on myself. I'm not even entirely clear on what I do. I know that it's funny but it's hard for me to talk about it like it's an art form. ♦

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# A MAN OF CHARACTER(S): A Conversation With Actor **BRUCE DAVISON**

By JUSTIN BOZUNG

If you were to take a poll with film fans and ask them to name the great character actors of the last fifty years, it's more likely than not that Bruce Davison is not going to come up. The reason for that is because Bruce Davison is too good. He's above any list that one could conceive of such a topic. Davison has a knack for wearing that perfectly disguising moustache. He blends in pretty easy, but not in a bad way. In fact, in looking at the film work of a man that's given us many great performances over nearly half a century, not only is he better than many of his peers, but he has often saved films from complete mediocrity. Maybe that's why Davison doesn't belong on a list of great character actors. Perhaps it's because he teeters on the edge of character actor and household-name movie star simultaneously. Who's been able to pull that off in their time in Hollywood? Not many.

Looking over Davison's film and television credits, one can't help but be impressed. He's worked with everyone from Burt Lancaster and Lucille Ball to Rob Zombie and Brian Trenchard-Smith, never slowed down and has become an almost ZELIG-like figure in many SHOCK CINEMA readers' film collections.

Born in 1946, Davison took an interest in acting at an early age. Going off to college to study art, he soon landed several roles on the stage, before eventually transitioning into a comfortable spot in front of the movie camera. With his trademark blond hair, Davison quickly became an up-and-coming leading man in Hollywood.

Roles in films like LAST SUMMER (1969), THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT (1970), WILLARD (1971), and Robert Aldrich's ULZANA'S RAID (1972) proved Davison's extreme diversity as a leading man. To see Davison in LAST SUMMER is terrifying, and there's a frighteningly psychotic aura to his performance in Frank Perry's cult classic. There's a lost tenderness in his performance in THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT. You can't help but identify with his character in WILLARD. Is that because of the source material, or is it because of what Davison brings to the title role? In ULZANA'S RAID, he even channels the mystical manliness of John Wayne.

Davison has always proved prolific. He worked with Ken Russell in the underrated CRIMES OF PASSION (1984) and had a role in John Landis' SPIES LIKE US (1985). Davison even had significant turns on such television shows as V (1985) and HUNTER (1986). Some of Davison's best work came through made-for-television films like THE WAVE (1981), DEADMAN'S CURVE (1978), SUMMER OF MY GERMAN SOLDIER (1978), and THE LATHE OF HEAVEN (1980). These roles have also shown us that Davison could handle anything that was thrown at him. Whether he was playing a school teacher, famous musician Dean Torrence, a Nazi on the lam in the United States, or a metaphysical dreamer who alters the world with his mind, Davison

pours his heart and soul into every performance.

In 1989, Davison was cast as David in director Norman René's LONGTIME COMPANION — an emotional look at the AIDS epidemic and how it affects the lives of several gay men over the course of the 1980's. At times, Davison's character comes through as a sort of secondary figure against an ensemble cast, but his performance is

back, huh? Well, I grew up in Philly. I was raised by my mom, she was a single parent, my father left when I was three, but I'd see him on weekends. I guess the glimmerings of it that I have now is that I used to do Claude Rains imitations as a kid. I used to have this record, a recording of him doing *David & Goliath*. I was good at being a mimic, and I used to keep from having to go to bed at night by doing imitations for adults, and they'd fall all over themselves. It was the first time that I felt a sense of power.

Then in college... Well, originally I started out at Penn State as an art major, but there was a theatre history major girl there that I fell in love with and so I got involved in it. But she kicked me out, and that sent me to New York City and I enrolled at NYU. In the mid-'60s they were just starting their program so I got into that. That would eventually become the Tisch Program there. And while I was there I got a job at Lincoln Center and it sorta took off from there.

**SC:** Did you have any sort of film experience that caused you to reconsider your major in college from art to acting?

Davison: I was always inspired by movies as a kid. I loved to go to the theatre and see the serials, the George Pal movies, the William Castle double bills. I loved monster movies. Later on, I took inspiration from seeing things like THE WOLF MAN, EARTH VS. FLYING SAUCERS and SPARTACUS, it was stuff like that — that really moved me.

Also, growing up in Philly, I was a fan of this guy on television that would host monster movies. His name was "Roland," but later on he would change his name to "Zacherley." He was a big hero of mine, and my friends and I used to run around in the streets with our hair parted down the middle just like he had on television and we'd chase each other with chains.

I never thought that I could ever participate in movies or acting, but when I got to college I realized I could. I auditioned for a play while I was at Penn State, and while I didn't get the part I caught the acting bug there, and that was it for me.

**SC:** So how did you go from NYU to working with Frank Perry on LAST SUMMER?

Davison: I was doing a play at Lincoln Center while I was still in enrolled at NYU, and that led me to getting an agent. And while I was there, they set me up to audition for Frank Perry and I got the part. That was in my Junior year at NYU.

**SC:** You guys actually shot LAST SUMMER out on Fire Island, right?

Davison: Yeah we did. We shot there at Cherry Grove. We were there from the end in the season, around Labor Day through all of October of '68.

We shot everything outside except the final scene. By the time we got to that final scene where we're all supposed to be sweaty and hot, we were freezing our tits off, it was glycerin and goose-bumps. It was really cold, so we had to



sublime, particularly in one pivotal and heart-wrenching scene. Davison would be nominated for an Academy Award and Independent Spirit Award for his work in LONGTIME COMPANION, and won the Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actor. He would also go on to become involved in gay rights and appear in such gay-themed films as IT'S MY PARTY (1996) and SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION (1993).

In recent years, Davison has been busier than ever before. He has continued to work on the stage, as well as behind the camera as director. Currently, he has eleven films in production including such standbys as RETURN OF THE KILLER SHREWS (2012), a role in Rob Zombie's upcoming THE LORDS OF SALEM (2012), as well as a part in the RAGING BULL "sequel," THE BRONX BULL (2013). This man is unstoppable, and that says a lot about what Hollywood thinks of him all these years later.

**SHOCK CINEMA:** I was wondering what you were like as a kid, and where did your interest in acting stem from?

Bruce Davison: Wow, we're going to go all the way

shoot the ending on a soundstage. It just wasn't working outside. It was supposed to be this sweaty hot rape scene and we were freezing, so we had to move to a soundstage to finish it.

LAST SUMMER was a little independent film. For me it was a windfall. I got, I think, three hundred bucks a week on that, which was great for me because I was just a college student. I was over the rainbow.

**SC:** I'm quite interested in your character in LAST SUMMER. Who did you see him as being, when you first signed on to the film?

Davison: Well, Cathy Burns refers to him as a guy who always knows where he's going to be, and he knows where he'll end up in life. He was a ruthless kid. He was self-centered with a great sense of humor, but he had no moral compass.

**SC:** Do you think that character was in control over the Richard Thomas character? Was he the instigator amongst the three of them?

Davison: No, I didn't think any of them were in control of anything. I think Barbara Hershey's character was the one that was cracking the whip, and we were just her wild animals that she controlled.

**SC:** In getting the role, did you go and read the book which the script from written from?

Davison: No, I didn't. I just went in and read some "sides" for Frank Perry. I didn't know anything else about it. My agent told me about Frank Perry's previous film, THE SWIMMER, and I was told that we'd be playing the children of THE SWIMMER basically. That was it.

**SC:** How was working with Frank Perry?

Davison: He was very effusive. He was a very inspiring man. He was bombastic and big. He would call us "les enfants" and sort of welcome us into the world of drugstore philosophy amongst other things. [laughs] For me, he was this guy that welcomed me into this community of making films, and he took me on a ride that would be the beginning of my life really.

**SC:** Can we talk about that great scene in LAST SUMMER where yourself, Barbara Hershey and Richard Thomas are sitting there, drinking beer and talking about "the major truth." How do you approach a scene like that? Also, since Perry's wife, Eleanor Perry, wrote the screenplay, did they allow you to do an improv? Because that scene feels like improv to me.

Davison: Well, I think we felt like we were. I don't know how much we were. I think they were pretty much directing us to say and do what they had written. But for the most part, the three of us had a great rapport, and that was what was important to Frank from the beginning. I remember he said to me one time that he was doing a quartet and that I was his cello.

Frank always encouraged us with great enthusiasm and laughter to take the character and roll with it. He wanted us to take what we had and take it as far as we could, as long as we stayed inside the boundaries of the line. This was the first time I got to do this. I remember Frank wanted to cut this one scene from the script, where Richard and I are playing Frisbee. So we talked



Bruce Davison, Cathy Burns, Richard Thomas, and Barbara Hershey in LAST SUMMER

him into keeping it because we thought it was an important scene, and years later he would always thank us for talking him into keeping it.

**SC:** One of the more surreal scenes in LAST SUMMER is that sequence where the two young men are washing Hershey's hair after they've just gotten high. Was that something that was done improv-wise or was that included in the script? Plus are you really smoking marijuana on camera?

Davison: That was actually scripted. Everything in LAST SUMMER that seems like maybe it could be improvised was more than likely scripted out. It was a pretty strict and detailed script as I recall. What we were smoking on camera wasn't marijuana... But we were all children of the '60s and were all familiar with marijuana. [laughs]

**SC:** Do you think that the three of those characters were actually mean-spirited human beings, or was it just those kids being teenagers?

Davison: Well, Richard Thomas' character was more of a victim than the other two, excluding the character that Cathy Burns played. But, the other two [Barbara Hershey and I] were just ruthless kids. I think it was basically about these kids that didn't know where the end was. They didn't know where the edge was, and they didn't know where to stop. I think that's kinda the message of it. Plus, it was 1968, and I think all of us were heading toward the edge of the cliff and we didn't know where to stop.

**SC:** There's a sexual tension amongst those characters too. Is it OK that I see that film as being about the majority trying to break the individual?

Davison: Yeah, that's one way to look at it, but I don't really think LAST SUMMER is one of those films that was intended to have any sort of archetypal message to it. I think it was an of-the-times film. The emotions of those kids ran away from them and it all ended in a tragic event.

**SC:** With that last scene in the film, the rape scene... If you zero in on that sequence and watch what you're doing in that scene, there is an utterly primal look in your eyes. What was going through your mind as you were shooting that scene?

Davison: [laughs] What was I thinking? Well, I was squatting down on two by-by-tours with a camera looking up at me, and Frank Perry with a bullock up my ass screaming, "Hump harder!" I was just hoping I'd get out of it alive. [laughs] That's what I was thinking. [laughs]

**SC:** I know with a scene like that, it needs to seem completely spontaneous, but was there any blocking or rehearsal that went into that scene? Because it seems so carefully chaotic and out of control.

Davison: Oh yeah, we blocked everything. It was all planned out. Frank told us where the nudity would be. We talked about how it was going to be shot. It had a blueprint, for sure.

**SC:** Yeah, and your ass looks great in it!

Davison: Thank you very much! My wife seems to like it too. [laughs] When the film came out, my Uncle Alan took my Aunt to see it and afterwards he said to me, "I took your Aunt to see LAST SUM-



Bruce Davison and Kim Darby in THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT

MER and there was 19-feet of your ass on the screen. I can remember when I used to change diapers on that ass." He was not happy. [laughs]

**SC:** Next you worked on a favorite film of mine, THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT. Did you have to audition for that or was it offered to you following LAST SUMMER?

Davison: I went out to Los Angeles to do a play. My agent at the time told me that I'd get more work if I went out to Los Angeles. So I went in to audition at MGM for the director, Stuart Hagmann. It was that scene where I go into the dean's office and knock over the pencils. I did that by accident in the audition, but Hagmann liked it.

So Hagmann said, "That's great. Let's go in and do it again for Irwin Winkler!" So I did it again, and Irwin gave me my first job in Hollywood.

**SC:** *I read that when you first came out to Los Angeles you befriended the great filmmaker William A. Wellman?*

Davison: I really just got to talk to him a few times. I was dating this girl, Maggie Wellman, and her dad happened to be W.A. Bill Wellman. I'd go over to see him, and he'd start to tell me stories that wouldn't come out until decades later to the public.

Talking to him, I also got a glimpse into how to have integrity in making films. I said to him once, "Why did you quit?" He looked at me and said, "Television. Master shot, over the shoulder, over the shoulder, done by lunch. Move on. They've got to realize, follow the bouncing ball! The bouncing ball is the essence of

your screen, whatever it is. I remember getting into this big fight with Darryl Zanuck over THE OX-BOW INCIDENT. He wanted a close-up of Henry Fonda with tears coming down his face when he's reading that letter, and I wanted just the shot of the fucking letter. It's about the letter. There's a cowboy hat in front of his face, and Zanuck wants Fonda to come back and do a close-up with tears coming down his face? Henry Fonda, bless his heart, he didn't do it. That's what it is. Follow the bouncing ball. Stick to your guns!" I've always thought of that when directing my own films.



Bruce Davison and Ernest Borgnine in **WILLARD**

**SC:** You met Kunen on the shoot, as well as his then-current girlfriend and the inspiration for the female character in the book, Laura Jecknick. Did meeting those two affect the way you would eventually play the character?

Davison: Right. Laura, yeah. [laughs] She stabbed Kunen once. [laughs] I don't know how it affected me to tell you the truth. I always felt inept, I always felt like I was this mid-western wasp that was trying to play an urban or radical. That seemed to fit the character I was playing though, based on how it was written by Kunen. The character seemed to come from a unique sense of humor.

**SC:** You co-starred with Kim Darby on *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT*. I know that you not only worked with her on the film, but that you also developed a serious off-camera relationship with her. What did you find so enchanting about her?

Davison: I fell in love with her on that movie. I wanted to marry Kim. I saw her and fell head over heels for her.

**SC:** I interviewed Kim a while back, and she said that she thought that it was you that had gotten her the role on *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT*.

Davison: No, I didn't get her the role, but I certainly put my two cents in with the director. I think Stuart Hagmann actually saw the amazing chemistry we had together.

Something funny happened to me when I was with Kim. I went to the Academy Awards with her in 1970, because TRUE GRIT was up for a few awards. It was the night John Wayne won. He was outside waving his Oscar around

and there were all these anti-war protesters yelling at him. So we were there sitting in a car, and John Wayne comes over and says [in John Wayne voice], "Well, it's little Kim. This must be your husband." Kim says, "No Duke, this is Bruce Davison." John Wayne paused and looked me over and then said, "Well, glad to know ya anyway!" And he shook my hand. [laughs] That's how I met John Wayne.

**SC:** What I adore so much about *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT* is the chemistry that you and Kim have. Why do you think there was so much chemistry between the two of you?

Davison: Well, I had seen Kim in TRUE GRIT, and

I was the new boy in Hollywood... I don't know. I just lusted for her. To me, she was the kind of girl that always seemed like she needed to be rescued and I've always had a soft spot for that. I still adore her, we're still friends today.

**SC:** Can you tell me about the day you shot the amusement park sequence in *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT*?

Davison: Sure. What I remember about that day riding on that Round-Up ride was that the cameraman was having a real hard time trying to keep the puke from flying out of his mouth. [laughs] But, it was a lovely day. In fact there were a lot of lovely days shooting that film. Shooting *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT* was one of the best times of my life.

**SC:** Your Simon character seems to be very lost in life. How much of that is you, versus the character on the page?

Davison: That was very much me, because I was lost in my own life. I just went where I was kicked basically. I was just out of touch in life. It was trying to look cool, trying to sound like I knew what I was talking about.

**SC:** Last question about *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT*. Can you talk about shooting that incredibly chaotic set sequence?

Davison: It was so long ago. I just remember it took forever, and it was all-night shoots. I remember overhearing an extra say one day, "Who do you have to fuck to get off this picture?" Hagmann was all over the place. He really wanted to broke. His style was a precursor to MTV.

I think Stuart Hagmann was a little bit ahead of his time directionally wise. When the film came out, I thought that the film was cluttered, but now when I look at it, the film is just so full of life. It's a pastiche of everything that was going on in the time in which the film was made. It was an era when the police had to protect kids who were spray-painting the word "pigs" on the sidewalk. I can remember that when we were making *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT*, we didn't really know where it was going or how it was going to end. I can remember being in the editing room with Stuart, and we couldn't figure out where to end the film. I just looked at him, and said it just needs to just end... period. I was very lucky to have been a part of that film.

**SC:** After *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT* came *WILLARD*. What was your experience like working on that film?

Davison: I had to audition for *WILLARD* over at Paramount for the director of the film, Danny Mann. I remember it clearly. The script was originally titled "Batman." I read the book, Batman's Notebooks and I thought it was great. I really wanted the movie to be more esoteric, in that the rats would only be a figment of his imagination. They'd only be in his head. They could be real or not. It was this Faustian story or something like The Sorcerer's Apprentice. I wanted the rats to be part of his imagination, like in the book. Instead I had six hundred rats crawling all over me. [laughs]

**SC:** Reading the script and then the book, what do you think that Bruce Davison brought to the character that wasn't on the written page?



**THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT**

**SC:** Going into something like *THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT*, had you read James Simon Kunen's book?

Davison: Yeah, I had read it. It was funny though, because the guy that wrote the screenplay for the film, Israel Horovitz, just went nuts when I was cast in the film. He said something like, "Are you nuts? You're gonna cast a blond-haired Nazi to play a Jew? What's a matter with you?" [laughs] But we became friends during the shoot. I won him over. [laughs] I was so fond of Israel, there was just something about him. We had some good times back then. We shot the film, then we went to Cannes together for the premiere. It was fun. I miss those times.

Davison: I brought improv to WILLARD. All of that stuff with the rats was done through improvisation. The script was good and solid, it was weird. And Danny Mann kept encouraging my weirdness. [laughs] But a lot of it had to be improvised, because the rats aren't always going to run into a suitcase on their own. You gotta be on your toes.

**SC: How was working with Ernest Borgnine?**

Davison: It was great! I saw him not too long before he passed away. I saw him at a party, and we were sitting at a piano. His wife walked into the room and Ernie yelled out, "Honey! Honey! Come over here, this is the young boy that did WILLARD with me." I was thinking, "For Christ's sake, I'm sixty-five years old and I'm still a young boy!"

**SC: Where was the house located that you shot the film at? It's such a character in the film.**

Davison: It was right off of Lucerne Street in Hollywood. Just south of Paramount Studios. Right opposite of the Scottish Temple. We shot most of WILLARD at the house, except the scenes in the attic and the basement. Those were done on a soundstage.

**SC: Growing up a fan of classic horror/sci-fi films, it must have been a dream come true to work with Elsa Lanchester on WILLARD?**

Davison: Oh, my god. She was great. I had a Super 8 camera with me during WILLARD and I've got some great footage of her doing the "Bride of Frankenstein" at the top of that stairway that you see in WILLARD between takes. She gave me some great advice [in a British ladies' voice] she said, "If you ever have a director that's giving you a load of codswallop, just say — oh, that's very good, let me try to incorporate that into what I'm doing — then do whatever the fuck you want."

**SC: Being that WILLARD was only your third film, what type of advice or lessons do you learn working with such incredible talents as Ernest Borgnine, or someone like Burt Lancaster on ULZANA'S RAID?**

Davison: Oh yeah. Ernie's best advice to me was, "Never go to bed with your wife angry!" That was great advice. In that scene in WILLARD, where I had to swing that iron bar at him. When I did that, I actually hit him in the foot by mistake. It's in the film, you can see it on his face! He takes the bar outta my hand, and swings it at my head, and I duck and it goes through the set. [laughs] He was the sweetest man in the world, and he's a teddy bear. But he was pissed. You don't hit Ernie in the foot. [laughs]

And when I worked with Burt Lancaster on ULZANA'S RAID [laughs] [In a Burt Lancaster voice] "Save it for the close-up kid! Don't try to give a performance for the soundman or the guys who put down the marks on the floor or the girl extras."

**SC: Did you see the WILLARD remake?**

Davison: No, I didn't. Over the years I've come to not like watching my own work. It's not fun, because you start to pick yourself apart. When I was working on ULZANA'S RAID, I remember thinking to myself, "Man, I am out-acting Burt Lancaster." Then when I went back and watched

the dailies, all I saw was this hyper Chihuahua dancing around a Bulldog. Especially as you get older. You go back and watch yourself, and all you see is yourself rotting.

**SC: Let's talk about Burt Lancaster and ULZANA'S RAID? How was that whole experience for you?**

Davison: Well, it was like a childhood fantasy come true. It was probably the best time I've ever had. I mean, imagine that you're a kid. And you're out there leading the cavalry with all of John Ford's stunt men. You're working with Burt Lancaster. He's your sidekick. Richard Jaeckel is the master sergeant. And then there is all of these Apaches chasing us through the hills of Arizona shooting at us, and carrying on. You get to stay at the Las Vegas Tropicana, and you get twenty dollars per diem each day, that ends up on the Baccarat table. [laughs] It was the best time a kid could have.

**SC: How was working with Robert Aldrich on that show?**

Davison: He was wonderful. He gave me the advice then that, while I didn't wanna hand it to at the time, I'd use for the rest of my life. We were out there in the hills one day and I was acting out and carrying on. He turned to me and said, "Kid, I'm gonna give you a piece of advice. You're not gonna like this, but I'm gonna give it to you anyway: you don't wanna be a leading man. If you're a leading man, you'll do six pictures and you'll be washed up at thirty, and nobody will ever hear from you again. Be a character actor; you're a good actor — you can do that. You could play supporting parts. You can do that and raise a family in this town." At the time I didn't wanna hear that, but that's what happened to me anyhow. 200 films later, I'm still around.

**SC: Burt Lancaster?**

Davison: Great! The stuff he would say to me. [laughs] [In Burt Lancaster's voice] "Doing a scene is like making love to a woman, son, you can't cum all at once. You've got to have a little bit of foreplay. You have to take your time in a scene, and save the good stuff for the close-up." [laughs] Work with what you got. I've got the baby blues

and pearly whites. You've got that wonderful, marvelous head of hair." [laughs]

We were out in the middle of the desert doing a scene, we're on horses and we're losing the sun quickly. The camera crew was setting up a two-shot, and he says [in Burt Lancaster's voice] "So tell me son, where are you from?" I told him I went



Bruce Davison in THE WAVE

to NYU. He says, "Oh, NYU. There's a branch in Hell's Kitchen. So you live there around 72nd, huh? Shelly Winters has a place there right around the corner. You ever see her when she was younger? Hell of a broad. I knocked her up in '56, ha-ha." [laughs]

**SC: After ULZANA'S RAID you did some incredibly interesting work that's really overlooked now — THE WAVE, SUMMER OF MY GERMAN SOLDIER, THE JERUSALEM FILE (1972). Do you think any of those contain some of the best work of your career to date?**

Davison: Oh, sure. All of those were really great scripts. They were terrific. I'd be in a looney bin today if I dwelled on all of the things that I've done in the past that I thought at the time were going to be successful, but didn't turn out to be. SHORT EYES is another. SHORT EYES contains some of my best work, and no one saw it. It's a classic.

**SC: I agree about SHORT EYES. But with something like THE WAVE, for example, how did you approach that character, because it was based on true events, right?**

Davison: Yeah, it was. He was a real teacher in Palo Alto. That was an Afterschool Special and we had to shoot twenty pages a day. It was insane. I had no time to think about anything. I just had to do it.

**SC: I think what's most frustrating to me as a Bruce Davison fan is that a lot of your mid-'70s and early-'80s work is just unavailable to the masses.**

Davison: Right. C'est la vie, I guess. But on the other hand, when LONGTIME COMPANION came to me I didn't think that anyone was gonna see that, and I ended up getting nominated for an Academy Award for that. You never know when the brass ring is going to come around.



Bruce Davison and Burt Lancaster in ULZANA'S RAID

**SC:** I heard a rumor that you were originally to be cast in Sam Fuller's *THE BIG RED ONE*?

Davison: Right. I was. That broke my heart. I would've loved to work with Sam Fuller. I had to turn it down. I got offered something that paid me a lot of money at the time. And Dalton Trumbo too. I was originally up for JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN, but passed on it for one reason or another. I can't

Davison: I'll tell you what I do now as an actor when things are overwhelming like that... I had a good friend who lost his wife... and he told me that you just have to do the donkey walk. You just have to put one foot in front of the other. You just have to grind it out. If you just settle in and grind it out, one sentence or one line can lead you into another. Or this thought leads you into another thought. Each time you run through it, you go on a different journey, discovering something new within yourself.

**SC:** How many takes on that scene?

Davison: We did it in one take. I remember in rehearsal I slammed my head into a door. Robert M. Young, who is a wonderful director, taught me a great deal about directing as far as how to give an actor freedom. When I slammed my head into a door, he told me that if I did that they wouldn't be able to edit it. He said, "First, it's not gonna match if you have an egg on your head, and secondly you don't need to do that. What you

are enough, you don't need to get everywhere. You're already there. Look at yourself. Roll the camera!" So he gave me that freedom to believe in myself to just go for it.

**SC:** Your partner in that scene is also incredible.

Davison: Jose Perez. He was great. We rehearsed that scene and at a point he said to me, "Why do you always want to rehearse this, man? You're driving me crazy, you sick fuck!" He dropped out at a certain point. He went down to Miami and got on his boat, and sailed away. He didn't like the rat-race of filmmaking, he wanted to live his life, so he just took off. You know most of the guys in *SHORT EYES* died within five years after we made it?

**SC:** Where was *SHORT EYES* shot?

Davison: We shot in "The Tombs" right in downtown New York City. On Centre Street

**SC:** You mentioned doing method work a few minutes back for this child rapist character in *SHORT EYES*. But do you take that to its furthest point — in the sense that maybe you avoid all contact even off-camera with any of the other actors in the film — because of the situation of that character?

Davison: A little bit, but I don't know how conscious I was of it at the time. Years later, I was having a conversation with Luis Guzman, and it's funny he's in *SHORT EYES*. I had no clue that I had worked with him on *SHORT EYES*, and he was one of the guys in the film that tries to drown me in a toilet. But I couldn't remember it because I think my mind was just on that character so much at the time.

**SC:** You briefly mentioned *LONGTIME COMPANION*. As with *SHORT EYES*, you have this incredible scene in there as well, the one with your character saying goodbye to your partner as he's dying of AIDS. Where did you find that emotion inside of yourself for that scene?

Davison: Well, it's sort of like what happened with *SHORT EYES*; I was already there. I didn't need to overthink it. My mother had passed away a few years before, and I think in that scene I was reliving that in a way.

**SC:** Is it a challenge to have to bring yourself to tears when a camera is rolling?

Davison: I had an acting teacher once who said, "You know, you can recall a wretched emotion, you can move the muscles of your eyes and learn how to do that, or you can hide an onion in your handkerchief. I always prefer the onion when I can get away with it." [laughs] It's so difficult, because there are 50 guys waiting around for you to cry, and they're looking at their watch. So whatever works. But at the same time, I did this film, *THE KING IS ALIVE* (2000), and it was done all handheld with a lot of improv. It's so difficult, because you've had ten minutes to work yourself into it. I was working with a great actress on that, Janet McTeer. Did you see it?

**SC:** Yes, I did. I thought your performance was wonderful, especially that sequence where your character appears to have given up and heads out into the desert alone.

Davison: Thanks.

**SC:** Going back quickly to *LONGTIME COMPANION*, you were nominated for an Academy Award for that. What was that experience like for you?

Davison: Like I mentioned earlier, I didn't think anybody was going to see it. I made two hundred



Jose Perez and Bruce Davison in *SHORT EYES*

remember why now. For *THE BIG RED ONE*, I was up for the role that Mark Hamill eventually played.

**SC:** Back to *SHORT EYES*, how did you come to work with Miguel Pinoero and Robert M. Young?

Davison: I saw Miguel's play, and then went and met the producer of the film. I had a manager at the time, who just got me in and I went and met everyone.

**SC:** Considering the nature of your character — an accused child molester — did you put any research into it?

Davison: Yeah, I did a bunch of research actually. It was tough. I put a lot of work into it. It was a difficult part and when the film wasn't a success it took me about a year to recover from the whole experience.

*SHORT EYES* was a failure because it didn't have any real money behind it. Curtis Mayfield, who was one of the film's producers, put some money into it, but that just wasn't enough to get it going. The film just disappeared. It evaporated. Plus the producer passed away right before it was released, so that didn't help it either.

When I was younger, it was all about indulging in your character. It was about methoding then. It was so hard, because he was so self-loathing, it was just very difficult.

**SC:** So was it an issue of getting lost in that character?

Davison: I didn't get lost in that character, but I did isolate myself from everyone else. I went and checked into the Chelsea Hotel. I lived there completely alone for about a month. I mean, I literally looked like I lived in prison. I was there totally alone and isolated. I just sat there and learned my words. I just sat there learning that big ten minute monologue that's the crux of the film. I just kept working on that.

**SC:** So how did you find that emotion, that cadence, that tension? Because that particular scene is so wrenching to watch.



Margaret Avery and Bruce Davison in *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN*

dollars a week on *LONGTIME COMPANION*. It was a low-budget indie, but it didn't matter because I just felt that it was something I had to do. About a year later.. and I'm sitting at the Awards and I look over and sitting a few seats away from me was Ron Silver. Now, while we were shooting *LONGTIME COMPANION*, Ron's project was shooting just down the street. He was working on a film called *BLUE STEEL*. I had gone down to see him on that, and I had felt so envious. I thought, "I wish we had this. I wish we had that. I wish I was in a big movie right now." So when I

saw Ron at the awards I said to him, "What happened to your picture?" He said, "It went belly up, but you were envious, weren't you?" That's when everything came together for me, because there I was.

You know, it was sort of a horse race, between me and Joe Pesci. I got the National Film Critics, he got the Los Angeles Film Critics and the Academy Award. So it was sort of back and forth. It was quite a night. I remember tipping the limo guy, and I said, "Ten bucks is all I've got." And he was crying. He was crying! He said, "Thanks." I was standing in the parking lot and Gregory Peck puts his arm around my shoulder and says, "I had to come here six times before I got mine. You'll be back." I said, "You had a studio. But thank you, Greg." I really appreciated that.

Working on that film was certainly one of the closest things to my heart I'd ever done. It was wonderful. Craig Lucas wrote an incredible script and I will always consider myself lucky to have been a part of *LONGTIME COMPANION*.

**SC:** What about *SHORT CUTS* (1993)? How did that come about?

Davison: I met Robert Altman at a party. I saw him at this party and after some time I got the nerve to go up and talk to him. He had always terrified me. I was scared of him. But I just went up to him and said, "I've wanted to work with you for twenty-five years. If I could, I'd read the phone book for you, I'd do anything." The next day I got a call from my agent saying that I got an interview with Bob



With Andie MacDowell in Robert Altman's *SHORT CUTS*

Altman. I thought it was a joke. Then Altman called me a few days later and said, "Jeff Daniels is out. Do you want to do this with me?" I said, "Yes" I mean, to work in a great film with Robert Altman, who's going to turn it down? I think *SHORT CUTS* is one of his best films.

**SC:** Backtracking some, what about *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN*? How did you get involved in that project?

Davison: I got offered it by the people at PBS. I had done *MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA* (1978) with PBS, so I just went with the flow. I liked the story, and I wanted to meet Ursula [K. Le Guin]. We really flew by the seat of our pants on a lot of it, making up a lot of the stuff in the film. We shot the whole thing in New York and in Dallas.

And a little bit in San Francisco.

**SC:** *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN* is listed as having two directors. Is that true?

Davison: Yeah, there was. But we directed some of it too. [laughs] Kevin Conway and I had to figure out how we were going to put my character to sleep in the film. Because remember, he was a guy that couldn't go to sleep. Then there were the aliens that showed up with those styrofoam turtles that look like shit. So we had to add some smoke and we had to back light the underwater stuff. I got naked, and I did the voice-over, and we just flew through it. [laughs] That's how we got through those dream sequences.

**SC:** To be honest, I never questioned why those turtles were oddly swimming by your naked ass in the film. [laughs]

Davison: Oh, good... I'm glad... [laughs]

**SC:** One of the more interesting aspects of your performance in *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN* is how you're always half-dead looking. Was there any method there — where you staying up all night long — or was it just a really great make-up job?

Davison: Well, we tried to keep everything as a comedy. It's really a soufflé in a lot of ways. The film is like the dreams themselves too. Plus, I've always been very good at suffering for the work. I was very good at suffering through the work, especially in the '70s. [laughs] I really loved suffering then. ♪

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# FILM REVIEWS

## LES IDOLE (Video Screams; 1968).

Focusing on a trio of fabulously famous pop idols, this colorful French psychodrama from writer-director Merc'O — adapted from his own stageplay, complete with original castmembers — satirizes music superstardom and celebrity worship with its brain-frying mix of wild musical numbers, screwball characters and disoriented flashbacks. Plus it's great to finally see an English-subtitled print of this subversive, ahead-of-its-time oddity.

Making her feature debut, Bulle Ogier (MAITRESSE) plays ditzy "Gigi la Folle" [Gigi the Insane One], while Pierre Clement is brooding, black-leather-clad "Charley le Surieur" [Charley the Knife] and Jean-Pierre Kalfon is pretentious "Simon le Magicien." As these "idoles" answer reporters' questions during a highly-unorthodox press conference, the three continually break into song about how they were discovered and their ludicrous lives, along with numerous flashbacks.

Cynical, protopunk Charley was a delinquent who happened to steal the right auto and inadvertently became a star; Gigi is a goody-goody tease, who wiggles and bounces about the stage in garish mini-skirts — like a French Nancy Sinatra — warbling songs laced with bizarre sexual innuendo; while glam, ex-psych Simon sports feather boas and pink cravats, but gets a wake-up call about his own disposability after his latest record only sells 350 copies. They've done anything to stay on top of the charts, no matter how idiotic or extreme (such as Gigi and Charley's publicity-stunt wedding, complete with singing nun), with the film's chaotic blend of music and memories examining how pop idols are created, their rampaging egos, what they represent to their audience ("the living proof that anybody can be somebody"), and how their behavior must never diverge from fickle fans' expectations. Our cash-cow threesome is becoming less fatigued of the bullshit, though, and begins pushing back against their handlers and exposing all of the scandalous lies.

After 105 minutes, the film's seemingly-improvised weirdness eventually becomes downright exhausting, with no opportunity for the viewer to catch their breath. Subtlety isn't a requirement when it comes to the frenzied lead trio or its visual palette, highlighted by hallucinogenic set design and come-affecting costumes from French fashion designer Jean Bouquin and Jean Cacharel (just check out Simon's magenta, John F. Kennedy-themed blazer!). Aided by cinematographer Gilbert Sarthou and Jean Badel (WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?) and assistant director André Techine (WILD REEDS), its musical numbers resemble psyche-fueled Scopetones, and like The Monkees' HEAD (released the same year), LES IDOLE exuberantly deconstructs the cult of modern celebrity — exposing the hypocrisy within and their fans' innate desire to kill their idols. It's artsy, colorful, hyperactive, and deliriously absurd.

## THE NAKED ROAD (Something Weird Video; 1959).

Inspired by a 1957 Edmund R. Murrow broadcast about prostitution in the US, this purportedly hard-hitting exposé — revealing the sleazy underbelly of modern-day "public relations firms," who turn impressionable young models into whores — is actually a riotously-amateurish, noir-wannabe performance by directing-writing-producing hack William Martin (THE DOCTOR AND THE PLAYGIRL). With so much nonsensical melodrama and so little talent on either side of the camera, this is nirvana for badfilm lovers!

Outside New Jersey's swanky Paradise Club, a mismatched couple — middle-aged, married businessman Bob Walker (Paul Judson) and 19-year-old model Gay Andrews (Jeanne Rainer, who also starred in the abortion potboiler YOU'VE RUINED ME, EDDIE!) — are necking in the parking lot after dinner, but when he suggests a motel room, his innocent date balks. As blue-balled Bob drives his date home, a rural speedtrap pulls him over for a \$100 speeding ticket, with Gay left as collateral with the crooked small-town Justice of the Peace while Bob rounds up the cash. Does this make any sense whatsoever? Nope! And that's only the beginning of this underbaked sordidness.

A friendly stranger, Wayne Jackson (Ronald Long), offers to help Gay out of this predicament, but instead ends up drugging this pretty young thing's coffee. When our mucky teen awakens, she's at Wayne's 50s sitcom-style home and he offers her a modeling gig at triple her normal rate. What's the catch? Senator Wayne works for a public relations firm (uh oh!) and wants her to turn tricks for his clients. If Gay refuses, she'll receive his "full treatment" — hooking her on heroin or starving her for days, until she changes her mind.

The script stretches what should've rightfully been a brief prologue for a larger story into an insanely tedious 74 minutes, with a big chunk of the film spent watching Wayne and his funky sitting on a tacky sofa, blathering ad nauseam about their other girls, while Gay is locked in a nearby bedroom. In an attempt to relieve the boredom, it's punctuated with unintentionally-comical criminal hijinx, such as Wayne's henchman blithely heaving a sleeping woman out of a high-rise window. Heads up! Let's not forget the listless b&w camerawork, slipshod plotting, lead-arse Wayne's ill-fitting wardrobe, or how every single set looks like it was dressed by the same incompetent, minimalist decorator. Although Rainer is your typical, interchangeable, C-level starlet, at least Long wisely plays his p.r. deviant for maximum hamminess.

## BAXTER! (1973).

American films centered around troubled kids often drown in their own treacle, which makes this British drama all the more refreshing. Equipped with an intriguing cast, it tackles life's tragic turns — mental illness, clueless parents, death — avoids easy sentimentality and offers no easy answers. Its basic story might be pure *Achtsamkeit* Special, but the naturalistic tone is closer to Ken Loach, while providing a showcase for Scott Jacoby (BAD RONALD), who won an Emmy that same year for THAT CERTAIN SUMMER and seemed to have a monopoly on playing disturbed '70s youths.

Teenager Roger Baxter (Jacoby) has just moved from L.A. to London with his recently-divorced mother (TAKING OFF's Lynn Carlin), and although he has a speech impediment, being unable to say the letter 'R' is the least of his problems. You see, mom is a wannabe-artist so self-absorbed with her lousy paintings that she lets her son tend for himself, locks him in a closet and attacks him in his sleep, only to adopt a dutiful facade for strangers. Roger is a bright kid, but having such a shitty parent has left him severely screwed up, with sudden bursts of anger and frustration.

In addition to the usual hassles associated with moving, like dealing with a new school, there is one significant upside. Britt Ekland plays gorgeous upstairs neighbor Chris Bentley, a fashion model who invites lonely Roger to the cottage of her French cookbook-writing beau (Jean-Pierre Cassel, father of Vincent), with the couple treating him better than his actual family. He's also assigned to speech therapist Roberta Clemm (Patricia Neal), the type of ballsy dame who incessantly puffs on a cig, doesn't bullshit her students and delivers a long-endure bitch-slap of reality. Sally Thomsett (STRAW DOGS) is a cute girl Roger crushes on, that is, until his world goes to hell, he wanders the city streets alone, and winds up catatonic and hospitalized.

Though best known as a character actor in films like FIRST MEN IN THE MOON and CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG, Lionel Jeffries also directed a handful of memorable, adolescent-themed '70s features, including THE RAILWAY CHILDREN, THE AMAZING MR. BLUNDEN and this bleak little tale. Working from an earnest script by Reginald Rose (12 ANGRY MEN), he brings out the very best in his cast — Jacoby keeps the quirks to a minimum, Cassel is charming, and while Ekland can often be lovely yet aloof on-screen, here she's warm and genuine. With the exception of a few distorted visuals during Roger's meltdown, cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth (THE MAGIC CHRISTIAN, ZARDOZ) grounds the story in harsh reality. The film is also "presented" by Hanna-Barbera Productions. Why? It's based on a Y.A. novel by Edgar-winning author/artist Kin Platt, who also wrote scripts for their '80s animated series THE JETSONS, TOP CAT and JONNY QUEST.





**WOLFGUY: ENRAGED LYCANTHROPE** [Urufu Gai: Moero Okami-Otoko] (All Clues No Solutions; 1975).

Based on a manga by Kazumasa Hirai (creator of *8 Man*), this wonderfully offbeat and unpredictable blast of Japanese action-drama stars Shinichi "Sonny" Chiba — only a year after his US grindhouse smash **THE STREET FIGHTER** — as a crimefighting wolfman, with director Kazuhiko Yamaguchi (**SISTER STREET FIGHTER**) hooking the viewer in the opening moments with his colorful, disorienting and occasionally hilarious visuals.

A panicked man runs through the city streets after dark, screaming inherently about tigers and curses, only to wind up slashed to death by some unseen force. Chiba plays reporter Inugami (nicknamed "Wolf"), who's the first to find the mutilated body, with one of his snitches informing him that the dead guy was once in a popular musical group and all of the other members have recently perished under similarly suspicious circumstances. Inugami also has a not-so-subtle personal secret. He's the last member of an ancient lupine race, and though Chiba never actually changes into a full-fledged werewolf, he has wolfish powers and looks vaguely feral whenever pissed off.

Could a young singer named Miki, who was once gangbanged by this band, contracted syphilis, and became the crappiest junkie-stripper in the entire Pacific Rim (her pretentious stage show leaves the audience so unsatisfied that they literally pelt her with garbage!), somehow be responsible for these weird demises? You betcha! Honorable Inugami is determined to save this poor woman, even though she's gone bonkers and is being manipulated into brandishing her deadly sprout-telekinetic rage. But when Inugami digs deeper into this case, he's sucked into a political/criminal conspiracy, shackled, imprisoned, and even experimented on, sans anesthesia.

If the story sounds a bit disjointed, that's because the script tries to cram everything possible into only 86 minutes — murder, tragedy, sex, graphic bloodshed, nudity, genocide, cheap-ass hallucinations — with Inugami even taking to the woods in search of his roots, only to end up captured by poachers, rescued by a sexy huntress and battling a small army. Chiba's limited acting range and brawny presence are perfect for this type of goofy outing, as the type of bruiser who can snap chains, heal miraculously, singlehandedly kick the bejeweled out of a half-dozen thugs, and make a woman moan that he's "not human" in the sack. **WOLFGUY** is wonderfully over-the-top in every way, from its dizzying cinematography to its colossal body count, plus as an additional treat, this particular print — taped off '80s Japanese TV and later English-subtitled — includes the original broadcast commercials.

#### **A GREAT RIDE** (Just For the Hell of It; 1979).

The 1970's saw a huge boom in the sport of motocross — growing from only 15 A.M.A.-sanctioned competitions in 1965 to over 1,500 in 1975 — but unlike the outlaw biker flick phenom of the late-'60s, motocross had few cinematic off-shoots. Directed by race-car-driver-turned-filmmaker Don Hulette (**BREAKER! BREAKER!**), this late entry in the two-wheeled road trip sub-genre has an ingratiating vibe and, with the exception of one major wrong turn, tekes a fairly laid-back approach.

Two adventurous motocross racing buddies, Steve Mitchell (Michael Sullivan) and Jim Dancer (**THE BIG RED ONE**'s Perry Lang), are determined to travel 'off road' from the Mexican border to Canada on their bikes, while flipping the bird to US restrictions against riding on federal lands. These guys

aren't exactly criminals though. They're just searching for a little freedom and happen to run into various locals during their pit stops — a female junkyard owner lets the boys sledgehammer a car, a couple foxy ladies join 'em for a watering-hole foursome, plus they pick up a rural third-wheel and a nutty, porched hippie chick. Even an initially pissed-off farmer turns out to be a pretty reasonable guy in the long run. Meanwhile, cocky Dancer has a complex about always coming in second place to Steve, which foreshadows trouble.

Things go awry when a young man challenges the boys to a race, accidentally dies, and his father (Michael MacRae) — a right-wing, gun-packing, vengeful douchebag — becomes obsessed with stalkin' the pair in his bad-ass, computer-equipped pickup truck. This idiotic character continually drags down the movie, and it's almost as if some nitwit financier became worried it was turning into a slice-of-life art film (gosh, who'd ever want that?) and forced Hulette to include a patently cardboard villain.

With the exception of this ill-conceived bad guy, the drama never gets too heavy, continually shifts gears with unexpected encounters and boasts an easy-going charm. The picturesquely cinematography by David Worth (**POOR PRETTY EDIE**) captures loads of cool bike footage, with firm editing courtesy of Steven Zallian, years before he took up scriptwriting for high-slung flicks like **GANGS OF NEW YORK** and **SCHINDLER'S LIST**. During its most authentic moments, this resembles a lightweight **EASY RIDER** (except with really lousy soundtrack tunes); during its hokey bits, it's typical, low-budget drive-in slop (plus it's never a good sign when your action climax generates the biggest unintentional laughs). In the end, **A GREAT RIDE** delivers exactly what its title promises, but little else.

#### **THE BEAST OF BUDAPEST** (Cinefear; 1958).

The Hungarian Uprising of 1956 made headlines when what began as a student demonstration against eleven years of Soviet occupation quickly grew to 200,000 people, with the State Security Police firing on peaceful protesters, and riots spreading across the country. Overwhelming Russian forces ultimately invaded Budapest, crushing the resistance and killing thousands. Tragic? Yes, but that didn't stop Allied Artists from rushing this b&w quickie into production, with its titillating blend of newsreel footage, fictional heroics, odious villains, and Cold War era, anti-Communist contempt.

The film begins on October 23, only hours before the actual protests commenced, with a Professor (**ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE**'s John Hoyt) refusing to cave in to government pressure about his anti-Soviet teachings, even as his adult son Charles (Michael Mills) does Mansra, the Russian-adoring daughter of a Hungarian General. Will this silly in' rally cause tension between our two young lovers? More importantly, will the detestable Colonel Otto Zagon (Gerald Milton) haul in the Professor (who's considered a "hopelessly diseased" intellectual "determined to infect others") and gun down this kindly old dude in cold blood?

All of the Russian characters are intrinsically evil and Zagon may as well be twirling a handlebar mustache as he murders, manipulates, calls in a Soviet garrison when protesters converge on the city's radio station, strangles his bottle-blonde girlfriend (voluptuous Greta Thyssen, Miss Denmark 1951), and flees like a coward. Even propaganda-swallowing Marissa eventually changes her tune, albeit only after she's imprisoned and raped. The supporting cast includes Joe Turkel (**THE SHINING**) and 24-year-old Robert Blake as students who join Charles' rebels once the bullets start to fly, plus John Banner (**HOGAN'S HEROES**' Sgt. Schultz) as a principled physician.

The notion of ordinary students turning into overnight "leftist counter-revolutionaries" seems just as hokey as it did in '60s dreck like **RED DAWN**, but at least this earnest effort exploits actual events instead of some Reagan-era masturbatory fantasy. Director Harmon C. Jones (**DON'T WORRY, WE'LL THINK OF A TITLE**) cleverly beefs up his backlot production values by incorporating incredible documentary footage (e.g. massive protests filling the streets, rioting, Soviet tanks' intervention), while scriptwriter



John McGreevey (DEATH IN SMALL DOSES) takes the easy route by emphasizing simplistic schmaltz, heavyhanded speeches and hammy characters — complete with an improbably happy ending, no less — instead of simply trusting in the inherent power of Hungarians selflessly dying in the name of freedom.

#### THE STOOLIE (Video Screens; 1972).

Director John G. Avildsen loves cinematic underdogs — ROCKY, THE KARATE KID, he was even the original director of SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER — and this early feature was his most unfaltering portrait of a loser. The tale of a down-and-out stool pigeon who gets one brief chance to experience the high life could've been a breakout role for any half-way-decent character actor. But instead, the gig was misguidedly handed to 38-year-old comedian Jackie Mason, making his film debut. At the time, his stand-up career was in the toilet following a controversial '60s appearance on THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW, and this was one of Mason's many comeback attempts. Unfortunately, the guy has absolutely no screen presence and his title character is little more than an obnoxious troll.

Roger Pitman (Mason) is a lowlife slob who eked out a living in Weehawken, New Jersey by working as a snitch for unscrupulous Police Sergeant Brogan (KOJAK's Dan Frazer). But after the unexpected death of a friend, this longtime stoolie decides to ditch town with \$7500 worth of stolen police cash. Next stop is Miami, where our frighteningly-pale schmuck rents the most ostentatious hotel room in the city, treats himself to a pricy new wardrobe, champagne and massages. (Warning: Neatly-nude Jackie isn't a pretty sight), and annoys women who're out of his league.

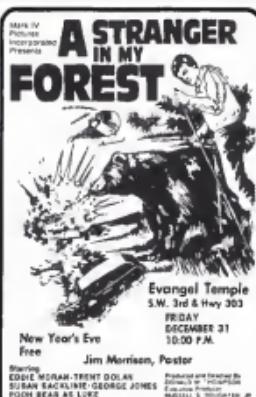
Pitman's shitty luck seems to change when he meets mousey, equally-depressed Long Islander Sheila Morrison (Obie-winner Marla Jean Kurtz), but what had the potential to be a touching love story is utterly demolished by Mason's one-note acting, which consists of spouting every line of dialogue with the same clipped, affected style he's used on-stage for 50 years. Avildsen pads the story with Florida atmosphere — tourist traps, cog races, ugly nightclubs — shot by Ralf Bode (DRESSED TO KILL), and also manages some nicely naturalistic casting. Kurtz is particularly genuine, with Thayer David as a Jersey criminal and Bill McCutcheon (Drop from SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS) as a gas pump jockey.

The script is a patchwork mess, with the early N.J. sequences reeking of seedy authenticity and Pitman's Sunshine State sojourn mostly a snooze. Plus in an idiotic subplot, Brogan drives to Miami to retrieve his ripped-off money, only to get hustled by crooked cops and mechanics along the way. There's even an unearned feel-good ending. Ugh! That's what you get when two of your three credited writers, Larry Alexander and Marc B. Ray, cut their teeth penning TV-spaghetti for the likes of Ann-Margret, Burt Bacharach and The 5th Dimension. No surprise, the film was a commercial dud, because who wouldn't want to pay to see a macabre, charisma-barren comedian playing a sad sack screw-up without any redeeming qualities?

#### A STRANGER IN MY FOREST (Video Screens; 1976).

Over the years, Mark IV Pictures cranked out some of the most delightfully cheesy Rapture movies of all time, but when they weren't scaring gullible Christians shitties with warnings of The Beast, producer-director Donald W. Thompson also beat some truly godawful, family-friendly melodramas. This maudlin, self-righteous, misguided, Tennessee-lensed "Gentle Ben meets Jesus" malarkey is one of their earliest, most insipid examples. It begins so beautifully, with an all-American family on a camping road trip in their wood-paneled station wagon. Unfortunately, dad hasn't yet accepted Christ, and only seconds after he announces that fact, a fire blows out, the car flies off the road and the parents are killed. Thanks a fuckin' lot, God!

After this hilariouss prologue, it's a year later, with orphaned siblings Robby (Eddie Morel) and older-sis Susan (Susan Bedelme) now living with Grandma and suffering through wrist-slaughtering-dull Sunday sermons. Robby has also befriended a wild bear named Luke, who he treats like a cuddly pet



BROOKLYN, NEW YORK TERRY DOLAN SUSAN BACKLUND GEORGE JONES POOH BEAR AS LUKE

and regularly brings to church. Obviously, this kid is no Einstein. Trouble erupts when a grumpy shopkeeper complains about Luke's thieving behavior, with the court ordering that the animal be found and destroyed. When Luke flees from his death sentence, Robby accompanies him on a tedious trek through the forest. Hell, even the fucking bear looks bored.

Meanwhile, a brawny, big city stranger named Terry (Trent Dolan) starts to romance Susan, but he's also hiding a deep, dark secret. You see, before troubled Terry found religion, he took out a mob contract on himself and is still on the run from professional hitmen. Really? Is that the very best scriptwriters Thompson and Russell S. Dougherty, Jr. could come up with? Oh, let's not forget about that contrived runaway speedboat full of explosives. And did I forget to mention that this film was based on FACT?

Competently shot by Robert Caramico (BLACK-ENSTEIN, KISS MEETS THE PHANTOM OF THE PARK), the film juggles these two impossible-to-take-seriously storylines — Robby and his bear, Susan and her beau — amidst plenty of Bible-thumping histrionics and woefully wooden amateur acting (I genuinely wanted someone to punch that sweet, grey-haired, interminably-preachy grandmother in the mouth, just to shut her up). And if Susan Backlund's name sounds familiar, that's because her main claim to fame was being the first victim in JAWS. Pushing 30, yet still playing a naive teenager, she's credited as the film's animal trainer and is one true terrible actress. I'll give the filmmakers a modicum of credit though, at least they seem sincere in their beliefs, unlike today's so-called-Christian politicians and TV-preachers, who don't give a damn about anything but themselves and money.

**THE GREAT NIAGARA** (Video Screens; 1974).

Going over waterfalls in a barrel first became a fad in the early 1900's, after schoolteacher Annie Edson Taylor survived a trip over the Horseshoe Falls — the Canadian portion of Niagara Falls — sealed in an oak barrel and became a local celebrity. But 5 out of 15 attempts at this stunt have also ended in death. That strange-but-true behavior was the springboard for this made-for-TV drama revolving around fooharity, Depression-era daredevils and a dysfunctional father who risks his own family in an attempt to tame nature. The fact that this ABC production was actually shot on location, with the magnificent Niagara Falls almost always within sight, gives the film a uniquely impressive visual appeal.

#### HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL's

Richard Boone stars as Aaron Grant, who lives at the base of the Canadian side of Niagara Falls and has a long history of battling these waters. Twenty years earlier, Aaron's left arm was crippled after being swept over the falls, and it's been his obsession ever since. His dumbass youngest kid, Carl (23-year-old Randy Quaid), follows Pe's every order and also has an idiotic get-rich scheme, but eldest son Lonnie (SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE's Michael Sacks) just spent six months behind bars due to his father's craziness, and has decided instead to try out farming with long-suffering wife Lois (Jennifer Salt, from De Palma's SISTERS). When Aaron learns that Lonnie is planning to leave town, it's time to ratchet up the guilt trip, nearly kill himself and potentially destroy what's left of his family.

Boone is terrific as this cantankerous, controlling geezer, who drunkenly bellows about "respecting" the river and "humbling" the falls — like it was some watery Moby Dick — and he's particularly antagonistic towards any dame who'd use feminine wiles to change him or his son. While other actors might've attempted to stir up some underlying sympathy, grizzled Boone never softens this boorish, bellicose old bastard. Quaid (then an Oscar nominee for THE LAST DETAIL) had already perfected his goofball schtick; Sacks is somewhat bland and mostly reacts to all of the boneheaded bravado; and a pre-ROCKY Burt Young makes an amusing appearance as Ace Tully, a death-defying grease monkey who tries to shoot the rapids in a makeshift canoe. Clocking in at 74 minutes, director William Hale allows the melodrama to get a bit thick at times, but the teleplay by Robert E. Thompson (A CASE OF RAPE) keeps this colorful, character-driven story consistently absorbing.

Be the daredevil who would do what  
no man had ever done:  
Ride a barrel over the murderous falls...  
and live

#### THE GREAT NIAGARA



ABC TUESDAY MOVIE OF THE WEEK

8:30 PM • 6

**THE MOVIE MURDERER (1970).**

In addition to being overstuffed with incredible character actors — including the great Warren Oates as a no-nonsense arsonist — this brashly-paced made-for-TV crime-thriller by director Boris Segal (*THE OMEGA MAN*) also "introduced" an up-and-coming, 25-year-old named Tom Selleck, in one of his earliest, mustache-free acting gigs.

Arthur Kennedy stars as old-school insurance investigator Angus MacGregor, who suspects that a notorious, never-been-apprehended pyro is responsible for several suspicious, movie-biz-related blazes across the country. Crochety MacGregor heads to Hollywood to track down this torch-for-hire, partners up with insurance hotshot Mike Beaudine (Selleck), and eventually deduces that someone is trying to destroy every print of a particular motion picture. If so, why?

When we're not following this "rusty old relic" and the SoCal playboy as they investigate similar fires across the US — San Francisco, New York City, Chicago (all through the magic of stock footage) — we're privy to the lifestyle of professional arsonist-extraordinaire Alfred Fisher (Oates), as he methodically prepares and executes his various tricks of the trade (e.g. phosphorous-filled balloons, a phone call triggered explosion). Fisher is becoming disenchanted with his occupation though, and gets sloppy by trusting a sexy, alcoholic landlady.

The explanation behind this convoluted scenario is rather silly, but a top-notch cast and Segal's amusing visual flourishes (like his striking use of multi-split-screens to jack up the suspense) make for a tense 85 minutes, with cinematography by Lionel Lindon (*THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE*). Kennedy and Selleck have a fun odd-couple rapport and the script even sets up a potential score for the pair (Gooh, a weekly show about two insurance company employees? Sounds like a winner!), while Oates takes an appropriately low-key approach to this loner. There's also Elsie Cook as retired arsonist Willie Peuruts, Robert Webber is a flustered insurance colleague, Woodrow Parfrey runs an immerged high-tech computer (which would probably fit into a smartphone nowadays), GILLIGANS ISLAND's Russell Johnson plays the sleazy boyfriend of Fisher's landlady, and Jeff Corey pops in later and provides answers to this case. But the film's highlight is Severn Darden as hilariously pretentious NYC underground filmmaker Jimmy Apache, who's shooting his latest hippie epic and invites MacGregor back to his groovy pad, with Steve Sandor (*BONNIE'S KIDS*) as King Kong, his love-beaded leading man.

**Tonight, NBC's the Place to be!**

**8:00pm (EST/PST)** **World Premiere**  
**First Time On Any Screen**  
**Arthur Kennedy, Warren Oates,**  
**Robert Webber In**  
**"The Movie Murderer"**



**In color on**

the bathroom, and eventually fucks her. Nil's even stalks his male neighbor when he leaves in the night, toting a suspiciously corpse-sized bag. What type of unlawful craziness is going on next door? More importantly, why is this idiot determined to take matters into his own hands?

It's obvious that the director was going for a Hitchcockian vibe, right down to its Bernard Herrmann score (cited from the composer's TV library), with the story's kinky vibe predating De Palma's '70s Hitch homages. He even squeezes in a *de rigueur* trippy dream sequence. Unfortunately, Nil is such a drab, underdeveloped character that his quest for the truth doesn't carry much weight, particularly since his libido usually trumps common sense. Though a major suspension of disbelief is required, this cryptic mystery isn't bad for such a low-budget effort, with several creepy sequences, a perky undercurrent and a wonderfully pitch-black capper.

Scorcese also received a co-editing credit on *REFLECTIONS*, a ridiculously pretentious meditation on a woman's fragmented psyche and withered marriage, which plays out like a tiresome grad-student film project. Written and directed by John Mavros (a NYU student who first brought the novel *The Last Temptation of Christ* to Scorsese's attention in 1961, and was later an assistant editor on *RAGING BULL*), this might've seemed vaguely cutting-edge back in '69, but it's now a fascinating time capsule of cinematic misguidance.

Susan Wallack stars as a young (and, befitting the film's level of leaden artiness, nameless) woman who's depressed about her marriage and is first seen pleading with her stern husband while in the nude. They sit around their apartment, make out a bit, argue, and stare off into the distance. It's not exactly riveting. Meanwhile, her monotonous voiceover regulates innermost "reflections" about a number of equally drab personal subjects. Along with tedious flashbacks to their better days together (like romping at a beach), this unsatisfied chick is soon seduced by one interchangeable man after another, in her search for... who the hell knows? Ultimately, our female protagonist wanders the city, shuffles through her past and learns to deal with the future, but this puddle-deep drivel lacks any real emotional resonance.

Mavros obviously didn't have much money at his disposal, but on a purely technical level, the film looks fine and includes some uniquely Manhattan moments (like spinning the Astor Place cube). Almost everything else is godawful. There's minimal dialogue or coherence; the pacing is so slow that even feeding some stupid drabs takes fucking forever; the self-indulgent camerawork (also by Mavros) zooms into close-ups of crappy artwork for no apparent reason; and even the couple of sex scenes will have you drifting off, thanks to its irritatingly somnambulistic score. Thank goodness for Ms. Wallack, who's pretty in a non-Hollywood way, tries to bring depth to this insufferably-empty banality and isn't hesitant about lounging around naked. I'm not surprised that *REFLECTIONS* seems to have skipped a theatrical release, since even the most pompous arthouse moviegoers would've ended up chucking their copies of *Cahier Du Cinema* at the screen.

**THE CLONING OF CLIFFORD SWIMMER (Cinefear; 1974).**

The concept of cloning was still rather new in the mid-'70s, but that didn't stop this made-for-TV movie from turning the idea into an overripe soap opera steeped in lousy sci-fi, as a self-centered shirtless jumbo jumps at the chance for a new life with the help of some cutting-edge science. It was also an entry in ABC's short-lived, late-night "Wide World Mystery," a post-local-news timeslot reserved for telefilms that weren't ready for prime-time due to their lower-profile casts, dime-store budgets and chinzy-looking, shot-on-video aesthetic.

Peter Haskell (*THE PHANTOM OF HOLLYWOOD*) stars as Clifford Swimmer, a cruel, deep-in-debt jerk who dreams of ditching his "miserable" life — which includes loving wife Julie (Sheree North) and stepson Todd (13-year-old, future-JAMES AT 15 heartthrob Lance Kerwin) — and running off with slutty co-worker Madeline (Sharon Farrell). Tony-winner Keene Curtis (best known to TV-viewers as *CHEERS*' snooty upstairs neighbor) plays Dr. Uri Lazlo, an expert in "psychogenetics" who offers Clifford an unorthodox exit strategy, courtesy of "the most important experiment in the history of science." You see, the Doc has grown an identical clone of Swimmer in his backroom lab, with our restless hubbie happily agreeing to Lazlo's cockamamie scheme of having it take Clifford's place, since the duplicate comes equipped with all of his memories. Then it's off to the Caribbean with Madeline!

But six months later, the worm has turned. Clifford 2.0 gets confused at times, but he's also a remarkably nice guy — supportive of his wife's needs, friendly to his stepson and the three are happier than ever — while the original Clifford is broke, living on a shabby sailboat, dumped by Madeline for a rich playboy, and planning to get back his old life by any means possible.

**THE BEST HITCHCOCK-TYPE SUSPENSE THRILL IN YEARS!**  
 FROM A LITTLE PEEPING-HOLE...  
 LEADS YOU TO SUSPENSE... AND MURDER!

**OBSESSIONS**

Supervision: RAAHMHOVDS  
 Director: J. Alex  
 Alexandra Stewart  
 Peter Gessler  
 Tom Van Beek

In during the opening minutes, when Amsterdam medical student Nilis (Dietrich Geissler) moves into a new apartment and accidentally creates a peephole into the neighboring flat when hanging a painting on the wall. When he sneaks a peek, it's a couple in flagrant delirio. Meanwhile, in one of those only-in-a-movie coincidences, his girlfriend Marina (French-Canadian beauty Alexandra Stewart, from *MICKEY ONE*) is a journalist investigating a murder that might have connections to Nilis' growing fixation (which, inconsequently, has him paying more attention to his peephole than the hot chick in his bed).

Nil's obsessive behavior becomes even more unhealthy (not to mention, ludicrous) when our initially passive voyeur takes a more active role. Soon he's breaking into the apartment next door, is nearly caught rummaging through the place, rescues a naked woman who's drugged and trussed up in

This is all spectacularly absurd and overwrought, with director Leila Swift (one of the earliest female directors working on network TV in the 1950's, who also helmed over 500 episodes of *DARK SHADOWS*) cramming George Leferts' congested teleplay into a compact 66 minutes, without abandoning the story's looser subtlety. Haskel is suitably sleazy, North brings sympathy to her abused wife, Farrell plays the gold-digging sexpot to perfection, while the supporting cast is rounded out by John Karlsen (*DARK SHADOWS* drifter Willie Loomis) as a confused police detective and William Bassett as a loan collector who inadvertently kicks the clone's ass.

#### WHEN EIGHT BELLS TOLL (Just for the Hell of It; 1971).

In the late 1960's and '70s, film producers were continually scrambling to replicate the mega-success of the James Bond franchise, and who better to hire on as a screenwriter than best-selling author Alastair MacLean (*The Guns of Navarone*, *Ice Station Zebra*)? Adapting his own 1966 novel, this was the first (and last) in a planned series featuring British secret agent Philip Calvert, and although the story lacks much complexity, it delivers a reasonable dose of action-adventure. Plus in his very first top-billed role, we're witness to Anthony Hopkins, action hero!

When cargo ships loaded with gold bullion are hijacked, Royal Navy officer and expert frogman Calvert (33-year-old Hopkins) is assigned to this mystery by his roly-poly superior, "Uncle Arthur" (Robert Morley, as a prissier version of "M"). Calvert goes undercover as a marine biologist who's exploring the Scottish coast via helicopter, accompanied by his trusty eggedge assistant (Corin Redgrave), and after running into unfriendly locals and heavily-armed pirates, he meets Jack Hawkins as egomaniacal shipping magnate (is there any other kind?) Skouras and his bored French wife American Charlotte (*LE SAMOURAÏ*'s Nathalie Delon) on their palatial yacht. Of course, Skouras and his minions are to blame for these missing ships, work out of a secret loch lair and have the entire region under their thumb.

Director Etienne Perier keeps this to barely 90 minutes, but despite all of its underwater intrigue, potential romance after Calvert rescues runaway Charlotte and an explosive climax as eight bells (midnight) approaches, there's barely enough plot to fit that scant running time. Meanwhile, the Scottish setting gives the film an oddly dreary and overcast facade, with widescreen cinematography by Arthur Ibbetson (*WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY*). Hopkins is capable yet blandly unremarkable, and while the script doesn't posit Calvert as some type of superhero (unlike 007, he's beaten black-'n'-blue by only two average bad guys!), he becomes increasingly bad-ass as the plot thickens and Sir Anthony guns down fleeing thugs, snaps necks and drowns a dude. It's rather generic, but at least MacLean doesn't skimp on the amusing demises and saves his one surprising plot twist for the finale. Co-starring Ferdy Mayne (*THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*) as a Skouras colleague

#### THE HAREM (Just For the Hell of It; 1967).

A woman rebels against society's antiquated notions of sexuality in this early effort from writer-director Marco Ferreri, and though never as gloriously outrageous as some of his later efforts — *THE LAST WOMAN, TALES OF ORDINARY MADNESS, LA GRANDE BOUFFE* — its bizarre, black-humored battle of the sexes really benefits from the gravitas of its star, Hollywood headliner and ex-BABY DOLL Carroll Baker, who had recently ditched Tinseltown in favor of Europe, after high-profile duds like *HARLOW* and her divorce from husband Jack Garfield.

Our story starts in Rome, with Margherita (Baker) abruptly breaking off her engagement on the morning of her wedding, fearful that she'll forfeit her own identity. Peevish fiancé Gianni (*CALIBER*'s

Gastone Moschin) informs her that a woman can only be fulfilled through marriage and children, but Margherita has a decidedly different plan for her future. In addition to businessman Gianni, two other men adore her — lawyer Gaetano (Renato Salvatori) and globe-hopping adventurer Mike (Michel Le Royer), whose latest gift was a pet cheetah — with each embodying a facet that she desires in a mate. But instead of searching for one man with that perfect combination, why not keep all three of them as a harem? Feigning a serious illness, Margherita lures them to the scenic coastal city of Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia (now Croatia), then turns the tables on these amorous Italians by using her womanly wiles to convince them to share and become one big, happy household.

Mind you, Ferreri isn't trying to make some ham-handed statement about feminism. He's more intent on satirizing both sides of the argument, with pigheaded Italian misogyny butting heads with that era's newly-embraced sexual liberation. Its tone is surprisingly lighthearted as well — what with all of the drinking, lovemaking and comic frustrations — while cinematographer Ljutki Kuvaljevic (*A LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN*) shoots 36-year-old Baker for maximum sultriness. It'll also be no surprise to anyone familiar with Ferreri's work that this situation eventually gets twisted to its illogical extremes, as these fed-up males band together to torment status quo-upending Margherita, complete with a provocative finale.

#### THE LAST MATCH (Video Screams; 1990).

Ernest Borgnine passed away in July 2012 at the age of 95, after a screen career of over 60 years, but this half-baked international hodgepodge from director Larry Ludman [a.k.a. Fabrizio De Angelis] is one of the most boneheaded pieces of low-rent shit the Oscar-winner ever signed onto. That's quite an accomplishment! Leave it to a pair of Italian exploitation scriptwriters — Vincenzo Mannino (*VIOLENT NAPLES*) and Gianfranco Clerici (*CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST*) — to concoct an asinine premise that meshes American football, Rambo-esque heroes, plus a few slumming character actor legends.

Eurohunk Oliver Tobias (co-star of *Jackie Collins' THE STUD*) is laughably unbelievable as American pro football quarterback Cliff Taylor, whose teenage daughter Susan is arrested for drug smuggling while vacationing in some unnamed Caribbean country. The heroin was planted in her purse, the US consulate is useless, and when hotheaded Cliff flies down to this corrupt, anti-American shithole, he winds up beaten by Susan's sadistic jailers. Enter Borgnine as irascible Coach Keith, who, accompanied by all of Cliff's teammates, decide to play "the most important game of our lives" by laying siege to Susan's prison and rescuing the girl, armed with machine guns and decked out in their gridiron uniforms, pads and helmets! Honestly, who wouldn't like to see a puntin football, with a grenade stuffed inside of it, taking out an enemy helicopter?

With its listless performances and hairy story, the first half is standard, xenophobia-steeped trash, with a pretty blonde once again tortured by evil, non-white foreigners. But it really pays off during the football team's game, which is even more ludicrous than it sounds. In the end, you suspect that the flick's absurdly inspired finale was just a fluke though, because the rest of it is utterly inept. For example, instead of simply cutting to the end credits after its explosive climax, the filmmakers tack on an additional 10 minutes of Cliff's team winning a big, generic football game. Zzzzzzzz... Henry Silva also appears as the sleazy, lecherous coach; Charles Napier plays an ineffective US diplomat; Martin Balsam is a greedy attorney (and sounds like he's reading his lines for the very first time); plus there's a "Jim Kelly" listed in the cast, but don't get your hopes up — it's not *BLACK BELT JONES*. Painfully wooden Tobias is the real star of this slop, with the American actors only popping up from time to time and Borgnine spending most of the nutty showdown sitting on his ass in a chopper, barking orders into a headset and never even breaking a sweat.





## They have SOMETHING TO HIDE -have you?

PETER / SHELLEY  
FINCH / WINTERS  
*SOMETHING TO HIDE*

COLIN BLAKELY JOHN STRIDE & LINDA HAYDEN  
Produced by ROBERT T. WILSON  
Directed by EDMUND FETTING

**SOMETHING TO HIDE** [a.k.a. *Shattered*] (Video Screams; 1972).

A dangerously stressed-out husband has his life turned inside out by an unwanted houseguest in this uniquely-structured U.K. psychodrama. An early effort from writer-director Aleister Reid (*TRAFFIK*), it fleshes out the novella by renowned British author Nicholas Monsarrat (*The Cruel Sea*), but would've been little more than surface quirks if not for Peter Finch's compelling performance, which brings depth to even its most exploitative elements.

It's Xmas Eve at the Field household and no one is merry in the least. It's more like a poor man's version of WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF, with drab government clerk Harry (Finch) and his wife Gabriella (Shelley Winters) pickled in booze. She regrets giving up her singing career years earlier, when this Brit swept her off her feet with now-broken promises of an exciting life in England, and tonight Gabby announces she's dumping the loser and returning to America. Harry's pissed, but he soon has even bigger worries after giving a lift to a pretty, blonde, extremely-pregnant hitchhiker played by 19-year-old Linda Hayden (who earlier starred in Reid's *BABY LOVE*).

Girling Harry with her knocked-up plight, free-spirit Lorelei has found the perfect ploy — manipulating him into taking her to his home, making her food and letting her crash on his couch. She just keeps stringing Harry along, while he's unusually nervous about neighbors discovering this young woman under his roof and is soon skipping work, getting liquored up, erupting with anger, and generally falling apart. After giving birth, Lorelei continues to demonstrate her utter lack of maternal instincts and wanders around the house in his wife's clothes. It's enough to drive poor Harry totally bonkers.

The two leads certainly make an odd pair. Finch has such a forceful presence that it's unusual to see him playing such a gutless sad sack (though all of the pieces begin to make sense during its grim finale). And unlike much of Hayden's work, this doesn't prove exclusively on her coquettish sex appeal. Colin Blakely co-stars as Harry's pernickety boss, while 2nd-billed Winters barely has 15 minutes of screen time and is un restrained, shrieking shrew mode throughout. Harry's beachfront Isle of Wight cottage makes a distinctive backdrop for this slow-burn freakout, along with cinematography by Wolfgang Suschitzky (GET CARTER) and a lush Roy Budd score. Unfortunately, this 86-minute US cut of the film is nearly 10 minutes shorter than the British version, which explains why Graham Crowden's "Lay Preacher" is nowhere to be found.

**LOKIS - THE BEAR** [Lokis Rekopsis Profesora Wittembeche] (Video Screams; 1970).

Steeped in regional folklore and eerie atmosphere, it's no surprise that this low-key Polish fantasy from writer-director Janusz Majewski was never exported to English-speaking audiences. Sure, its story (based on a 1869 novella by French writer Prosper Mérimée) revolves around a werewolf-esque concept — although in this instance, the creature is a bear — but the film is strictly leisurely-paced period intrigue, without any explicit horror or thrills.

Pastor Wittenbach (Edmund Fetting) is travelling through Eastern Europe when he befriends a Duchess and her lovely niece Julia (Małgorzata Braunek, former wife of filmmaker Andrzej Zulawski, who appeared in his first two features, *THE DEVIL AND THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT*), with all of them heading to Lithuania. For the women, it's home, while our pious pastor is studying religious sites and crashes at the mansion of Count Szemiel (Józef Duriasz), who has some offbeat problems. Thirty years earlier, his mother went crazy following a bear

attack, gave birth nine months later and was convinced that her child was some sort of beast. Even now, she screams from her tower balcony to kill him. It's no surprise that her son turned out to be a recluse who's obsessed with blood and the dual nature of mankind, suffers from horrible nightmares and worries about killing someone in his sleep. He also has a nearly uncontrollable physical attraction to the aforementioned Julia, which leads to a macabre impromptu wedding ceremony and one hell of a honeymoon night.

So is this Count possessed by the spirit of a bear? Alas, the script is more content to tease this possibility than give us any satisfying pay-off. Meanwhile, its strangest moments are often laced with dark humor and centered around Wittenbach. This pastor has travelled the world researching religion and tries his damnedest to blithely ignore local eccentricities, even as he encounters superstitious villagers who believe in demons and devils; a gnarled old witch with some clever tricks; and the Count's lecherous physician, who likes to peep on nude women as they bathe. But it's over an hour into the film until he hangs out with rowdy gypsies and finally learns the meaning of *lokis*, which is synonymous for both 'bear' and 'madman.' Honestly, it's probably best to not even label **LOKIS** as horror, because its subtitled tone will undoubtedly let anyone expecting standard fright fare to sleep and is best reserved for those in search of an esoteric do-lop of chilly mood and menace.

**LOKIS** ROMAN GŁĘBÓ  
wy Piotr M. MŁODTOWI  
scen. R. GŁĘBÓ  
zdjęcia Roman RUDINSKI  
montaż Roman RUDINSKI  
Efekty specjalne Stefan KOWALEWSKI  
dramaturgia Stefan KOWALEWSKI  
producent Agnieszka KOWALEWSKA  
montaż Roman RUDINSKI  
montaż Roman RUDINSKI



**COP-OUT** [a.k.a. *Stranger in the House*] (1967).

This British murder mystery from first-time writer-director Pierre Rouve attempted to spruce up Georges Simenon's 1940 novel *The Strangers in the House* with groovy '60s trappings, faux-artistry flourishes and fragmented storytelling. That approach worked much more effectively a year earlier in Antonioni's *BLOWUP*, which Rouve executive produced, while the only smart move this trendy hodgepodge made was in hiring always-reliable James Mason.

Once a respected courtroom prosecutor, John Sawyer (Mason) has become a reclusive drunk and currently shares his spacious home with Mod daughter Angela (fresh-faced, 22-year-old Geraldine Chaplin, hot off of DOCTOR ZHIVAGO). She's had a long, contentious relationship with her father and now runs with a hip young crowd that's supposed to be appealingly rebellious, but instead just seems condescending and insipid.

Late one night, Sawyer spots an intruder in his house and discovers a dead body in the attic. Our corpse is Barney Teale ("Mack the Knife")-singer-turned-actor Bobby Darin, a fast-talking American that his daughter and her friends met while trespassing onboard an empty ocean liner. After allowing him to crash in a dilapidated theatre belonging to the father of wealthy pal Desmond Flowers (Ian Ogilvy), they moved it to Angela's place, since dad would be too besotted to notice. When Angela's boyfriend Joe, a poor Greek immigrant, is arrested for the murder, Sawyer smells something fishy, sobers up, agrees to represent the guy, and dips for the truth — sifting through potential clues and quizzing Angela's upper-crust cohorts, who're all too quick to bad mouth working-class Joe.

The clumsy script continually cuts back and forth between flashbacks to the gang's time with manipulative wacko Barney and Sawyer's sleuthing, with everyone having their own version of the truth (as well as some ugly anti-immigrant sentiments). Mason is its main saving grace, with his character delivering dry wisecracks at the darkest moments and using everyone's underestimation of him to his own benefit. Meanwhile, Chaplin lacks much presence and her character is annoyingly judgmental; Ogilvy is well cast as a handsome, supercilious twit; Piggy Steel (*THE VAMPIRE LOVERS*) pops in as a librarian; and 31-year-old Darin plays his jittery, volatile sleezeball without restraint, undoubtedly hoping it would distract us from his atrocious hairstyle. Cinematographer Ken Higgins (*DARLING*) makes this nonsense look better than it deserves, while the soundtrack includes Eric Burdon and The Animals' B-side tune "Ain't That So."

**DAVID PEEL: ROCK-N-ROLL OUTLAW** (1986).

68-year-old street musician and leftist icon David Peel might be only a footnote in music history nowadays, but the guy is a curmudgeonly East Village institution and still crazy after all these years. Most recently,



Peel leapt onto the New York City Occupy Wall Street bandwagon, no surprise, since this proud '60s-era radical has spent the past four decades promoting personal freedom. Peel's goofy stoner persona is in full bloom for this hour-long documentary from 26 years ago, which often feels like an embellished home movie; it mixes crude performance footage, rambling interviews and assorted nonsense.

Even back in the '80s, Peel's voice sounded like shit and his guitar playing sucked. But there's no shortage of brain-fried energy on display here, as he hangs out in various city parks and performs tunes like "Hippie From New York City," "O Beautiful Washington Square Park," "I Like Marijuana," plus "The Ballad Of New York City." John Lennon-yoko Ono" in Central Park's Strawberry Fields. That's intercut with interview snippets, as perpetually stoned Peel bubbles outside his East 5th Street pad and on a rooftop; recalls his times with John and Yoko (which led to Peel's 1972 Apple Records debut, "The Pope Smokes Dope"), as well as the ex-Beatles' murder; freaks out security guards in front of The Dakota with his unhinged antics; blasts through "Cockroaches" on THE UNCLE FLOYD SHOW; and ends with a raucous "Rock'n' Roll Outlaw" free-for-all. Plus look for a fleeting cameo by junkie John Sasseley from Lech Kowalski's GRINGO.

Every so often, the guy makes a cogent point, such as ranting about corporate record labels or the influx of yuppies to his neighborhood. But much of the time he's just loud, unleashed and annoyingly plays to the camera, with a little Peel going a long way. If you're not a fan, he can be pretty fucking abrasive at times, while his impromptu performances and random jamming quickly get monotonous. My biggest gripe is the film's lack of any deeper insight into Peel's life, and it would've benefited greatly from some anecdotes by friends and colleagues. Instead of focusing exclusively on Peel, still, if you're a fan, you'd undoubtably dig this appropriately raw portrait of a maniacal, one-of-a-kind showman straight from the heart of the Lower East Side.

THE MIDNIGHT MAN (Just For the Hell of It; 1974).

The most interesting aspect of the college campus murder mystery is the participation of Burt Lancaster, who not only stars in this rather pedestrian whodunit, but is also credited as screenwriter, director and producer.

(outside of 1955's **THE KENTUCKIAN**, his only attempt behind the camera), along with Roland Kibbee (who penned early Lancaster outings like **VERA CRUZ** and **THE CRIMSON PIRATE**). Based on David Anthony's novel *The Midnight Lady and the Mourning Man*, it's hard to know what exactly drew Burt to this project, which often plays out like your average small-screen detective yarn, albeit spiced up with R-rated elements and so many first-rate character actors that you might overlook its more contrived twists.

Recently released from the slammer, ex-Chicago cop Jim Slade (Lancaster) gets a job as a university's night shift security guard, with old police buddy Quartz (Cameron Mitchell) heading up the department. When saucy student Natalie (19-year-old, pre-DUKES OF HAZZARD Catherine Bach), the daughter of influential State Senator Clayborne (COOL HAND LUKE's Morgan Woodward), is murdered in her dorm room, the thickheaded local cops (led by Harris Yulin) quickly find a prime suspect in a pervy, Bible-thumping college janitor (THE LONGEST YARD's resident deviant, Charles Tyner). On the other hand, Slade is convinced that Natalie's death is connected to confessional tapes stolen from a Psych Professor (COUNT YORGA's Robert Quarry) and is driven to uncover the truth... no matter how unbelievably convoluted it appears.

The overstuffed script juggles potential blackmail, political intrigue, secret societies, a second murder, then a third, as well as Slade putting the creepy off-dude moves on his parole officer (Susan Clark, who was only 27 years his junior) and becoming a suspect himself after the police learn he'd hung out with stoned Natalie only hours before her demise. Also look for Oscar-nominee Joan Lorring as Ouart's wife, plus William Lancaster (Burk's dad, who went on to script THE BAD NEWS BEARS and John Carpenter's *THE THING*) as a student. Best of all, some much-needed unpredictability arrives in the form of Ed Lauter and Mills Watson as thieving, stocking-masked, hillbilly fucktoms who take Slade captive. Effective but also severely average, Lancaster and Kibbee bring zero directional flair to the proceedings, stretch the middling thriller to 113 minutes, and though Burk looks a bit weather-beaten, he's still feisty enough to sell the role. Clemson University alumnae will also undoubtedly get a kick out of seeing their South Carolina alma mater used as a backdrop for kinky shenanigans and cold-blooded murder.

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KIM NEWMAN: London, UK.

**CIMARRON STRIP:** "Knife In The Darkness" (1968). Like the longer-running THE VIRGINIAN, the single-season (1967-68) Western series CIMARRON STRIP consisted of feature-length episodes. It presented the adventures of a frontier Marshal, Jim Crown (Stuart Whitman), showing something of a social conscience (courtesy of series developer Christopher Knopf) and a tendency to take history a bit more seriously than the average GUN-SMOKE. This episode, scripted by Harlan Ellison to make use of all the research he did for "The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World" (from Dangerous Visions), is a Western bookend for the s.t. Jack the Ripper of Robert Bloch's STAR TREK script "Wolf in the Fold" (just as the Ellison story is a sequel to Bloch's TV contribution "A Toy for Juliette"). The notion that Jack the Ripper might have gone West features also in the cleverly-titled movie A KNIFE FOR THE LADIES (where it's a font) and Richard Laymon's novel Savage, but this is the most sustained take. It opens at an after-dark open air hoodoo as Cimarron Strip suffers from an unnatural fog, with popular 'dance-hall girl' (the ancient euphemism was fraying by the late-'60s and Ellison comes very close to saying what the girls actually do at "Pony Jane's saloon") Josie (Jennifer Billingsley) causing a scrap between two admirers. Angry, lecherous Tar St. James (David Canary), the sort of incidental character who does so many suspect things he has to be innocent, pulls a knife and has to be talked down. Josie then wanders off in the night, to be pursued by a man seen as a peer of dark trouser who eviscerates her (conveyed by a close up of her hand stiffening as she is stabbed). The whole episode has a horror look, reasonably well-handled by director Charles R. Rondeau; indeed, the cheery title sequence of Crown riding across the landscape in broad daylight seems out of place since the rest of the episode takes place at night, with the fog-machines working overtime. For an act or two, suspicion hovers

around locals: the widowed town doctor (Karl Swenson), the only expert surgeon in these parts, has been spending time at Pony Jane's; Indian Shadow Feller (Ron Soble), an expert skinner who had an apparent relationship with the dead woman, is Taft's favored suspect and obviously most likely to be lynched; and Pedigree (Don Hamner), a knife-sharpening trinker, likes to loiter outside Pony Jane's to eye the lovelies. Then, Crown's younger sidekick, newspaperman Francis Wilde (Randy Boone) — his older pal is a stereotype Scot, Angus MacGregor (Percy Herbert) — turns up press clippings and makes a connection with the Ripper case. Though the script mentions real names and dates, there's an odd glitch — the London killings must have happened months earlier, but it's still supposed to be 1868. Ellison's research kicks in as Tipton (Patrick Horgan), a mustachioed member of George Lusk's Whitehead vigilance committee (and the brother of one of the victims), shows up, having tracked Jack the Ripper across the Atlantic. Wilde receives Ripper letters, with Ellison pastiching the language of the originals (he also gives much of the cowpoke language a saltier, more picturesque sound than most TV Westerns pre-DEADWOOD). Because of his British accent, Crown suspects Tipton, but the late-arriving real culprit is soft-spoken Enoch Skennit (Tom Skerritt), who claims not to be a misogynist but a social reformer, who kills (as per a remark of George Bernard Shaw's) to bring attention to slum conditions — though Skennit plays him (very well) as a nasty, self-justifying scoundrel. The ironic finish has the killer stalked and slaughtered by Shadow Feller and other 'savages', who leave his corpse draped over a rock — solving the mystery of why the case was officially never closed, since Wilde has nothing to back up the story he wants to sell. With Jill Townsend as Crown's regular girl (impenitent but saved), Jeanne Cooper as Pony Jane and Grace Lee Whitney (of STAR TREK) as another frou-frou dame. Though the theme is by Maurice Jarre, the incidental music is by Bernard Herrmann.

#### VIN CONSERVA: New Hyde Park, NY.

**SOMETHING BIG** (1971). At the end of the 1960's, the most popular and prolific US film genre of all time, the Western, seemed to have run its course. But like some mythic gunlinger riding in at the absolute last second to save the day, the Western appeared to still have some bullets left in the chamber, thanks to three critically-praised box-office 1969 hits — BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID, TRUE GRIT and THE WILD BUNCH — as well as the newly-born Spaghetti Western. And then, SOMETHING BIG happened... This turn-blew-tale begins with two men of action' at a crossroads in their lives. One is an outlaw named Joe Baker (Dean Martin), who was given two years by his fiancee, Dover McBride (Carol White), to do "something big" in the Wild West. Instead, he and bagpipe-playing future brother-in-law Tommy (Don Knight) end up doing something illegal — as in, armed robbery. Well, Dover is on her way to meet up with her husband-to-be, and since this young lass Rose always gets what she wants, Joe and Tommy quickly come up with a plan to do "something big". We also meet Cavalry Commander Col. Morgan (Brian Keith), who's about to retire from military service. The Colonel is also awaiting the arrival of his wife (Pussy Galore herself, Honor Blackman), but Joe and his boys have other ideas for the lady — our 'outlaw heroes' kidnap the Colonel's missus and plan to make a trade-off with a dim-witted hornet named Jonny Cobb (Albert Salmi), who lives out in the desert in an old shack. The 'gang' goes down, but soon Joe and the lady are making eyes at each other, with the home-too-bright Colonel and his stout Jesse (legendary Ben Johnson) in pursuit. The Colonel also gets himself 'solled' by 'saloon girls' led by the very funny Joyce Van Patten. It all leads to a showdown with all involved, plus about 50 banditos... Andrew V. McLaglen was a meat-'n-potatoes type of director, and though his films never had Peckinpah's undercurrent of menace or John Sturges' 'honor within male bonding,' McLaglen was at times the best at straight-ahead stories with plenty of action — which films such as THE DEVIL'S BRIGADE, THE WILD GESEES and THE SEA WOLVES can attest. However, SOMETHING BIG is not on that list. The story's broad humor doesn't lend itself to McLaglen's less is more' style, but as with all McLaglen's films, it's a cult-character-actor fan's wet dream. Besides Johnson and Salmi, there's also Denver Pyle, Robert Donner, Harry Carey Jr., David Huddleston, and even Bob Steele! But it's the ladies — Blackman and White — who really shine, and not even Dino's roughsh charm has a chance against Ms. White's brogue. Sure, you could find a better time filler than SOMETHING BIG, but its cast alone makes it somewhat mandatory viewing for Western genre fans.



HONOR BLACKMAN, DEAN MARTIN, BRIAN KEITH  
"something big"

#### WHO KILLED THE MYSTERIOUS MR. FOSTER?

(1971). As the '70s rolled in, the Western genre was indeed headed for the last round-up. Although dozens of Old West TV-series were still being created, almost all of them lasted less than one season; as for the big-screen, scores of oaters were being cranked out, but they lacked box-office punch. It was at this point that the NBC network greenlit a 'Movie of the Week' that would star genre fave Ernest Borgnine (fresh from his blood-soaked outing in THE WILD BUNCH) and would attempt to cross-pollinate an old favorite (the western) with a popular new genre that had begun to dominate the airwaves (the 'who-did-it?' crime story)... Our tale begins in a very typical Dust Bowl of a Western town. Just as Reverend Foster (G.D. Spradlin) has begun to work himself into a lather, he keels over dead. This sends the town into a frenzy, not so much because the Preacher will be missed, but because all of the money to build a new church is now missing. In addition, Doc Waters (DIRTY HARRY's Woodrow Parfrey) announces that Foster was poisoned! So not only does this town have a murderer in its midst, but election time is upon them, with the bearded Sheriff (noir veteran Jay C. Flippen) fearful that if his trusted Deputy Sam Hill (Borgnine) — a dither his whole life — doesn't 'throw his hat in,' then the town will fall into the clutches of oily, crooked Deputy #2, Doyle Pickett (Bruce Dern). Between the elections, the murder and the missing church cash, this town is ticking away! The dusty streets have also blown in plenty of new faces, along with the tumbleweeds, such as the Preacher's battle-axe wife (Carmen Matthews); a sexy lass from across the pond (the lovely Judy Geeson), who happens to be the Preacher's other wife; plus the Preacher's silver-tongued, conman partner (MCLOUD's J.D. Cannon). There's also Jethro (future stuntman Stephen Husid), a wild kid who becomes attached to Hill and the town's newsman (Will Geer), while the rest of the townsfolk are cut out with familiar faces — Slim Pickens, Dub Taylor, Dennis Fimple, John McGiver, George Furth, and Sam Jaffe. What a cast!! The question begs, however, where is the money? And who had it in for the two-faced man of the cloth? It also seems that Hill has an enemy in town — it comes in a bottle or a glass — with time running out not only for our hero, but in 1971 for this genre as well. And that's the real crime here, because the small-screen 'horse operas' is a winner from start to finish. Besides its unreal cast, the production boasts a quirky, suspenseful script by the legendary team of Richard Levinson and William Link (COLUMBO), taut direction by way of Fielder Cook (A BIG HAND FOR THE LITTLE LADY) and a score by jazz great Pete Rugolo, all serving under the watchful eye of production king Roy Huggins (creator of THE FUGITIVE).

**MIKE SULLIVAN:** Mountaintop, PA.

**HAWK JONES** (1968): As clichéd as it may sound, a picture really is worth a thousand words. Even if those words are merely "duh" repeated 1,000 times. The front of the slip case for **HAWK JONES** happens to be one of those pictures. The artwork looks like it was hasty airbrushed by someone who's clearly uneasy with painting something that isn't a panther on the side of a van while a tagline cheerfully announces that **HAWK JONES** is "the movie with the kids in it," which isn't so much a tagline as much as it is a vague recollection of something your mother watched on TNT three weeks ago. However, as amateurish as the **HAWK JONES** cover art may appear, it also prepares you for the dumb and occasionally charming film you're about to see. Like **BUGSY MALONE**, **HAWK JONES** is a tongue-in-cheek crime movie with a cast made up entirely of small children. But unlike **BUGSY MALONE**, **HAWK JONES** isn't a musical and doesn't shy away from the idea of child-on-child violence. In **HAWK JONES** nobody is murdered symbolically with a cream pie, because this film realizes that all symbolism is artless than tarts and ultimately needless. Especially when you have a small army of Uzi-wielding children who are ready, willing and able to kick each other in the face or shove one another into an empty bathroom stall, toss in a grenade and then lock the door as they giggle impishly. But don't worry parents; **HAWK JONES** is tor "all ages," which means a cartoonish "ka-powey" is superimposed on screen every time a gun is fired or whenever a bullet lightly tears through the throat of an eight year old. Story-wise the film is indistinguishable from any generic **LETHAL WEAPON** rip-off. Yet again an unlikely pair of cops must overcome their differences, take down a mob boss and blah, blah, blah. It's the most overused plot in the history of film and yet it works simply because of the mildly subversive joie that comes from watching untaught children bring life to such stock characters as the perpetually shouting police chief whose dialogue solely consists of standard action movie boilerplate like, "You're on thin ice" and "The commissioner is breathing down my neck." But as much fun as it is to watch the film gently satirize action movies, it's even more fun to watch as **HAWK JONES** grows increasingly misguided and weird. Because the film was made at a time when America was still terrified of people who dyed their hair or wore studs, a knee-high punk himbo with a glittery dog collar is hired by the mob boss to murder Hawk. In other goofiness, Hawk's screaming partner intimidates people by stepping on tometoes, a chalk outline of a dead body is drawn like a stick figure and there's a closing credits sequence which finds all of the dead characters briefly coming back to life just to mug for the camera. But the most hilarious thing about **HAWK JONES** is the titular character. Even though the filmmakers repeatedly assure us that Hawk is a deadly combination of John Shaft and Dirty Harry, their efforts are undermined by the casting of Valient DuHart — a nasally, Dracula-esque twerp who would be better suited playing an incorrigible computer expert in a Disney comedy. Although the film's novelty value wears thin after a while, **HAWK JONES** is still surprisingly entertaining and could only exist in a more innocent time when a film could have a sultry saxophone on its soundtrack and not be an erotic thriller with a title like **JAGGED WHISPERS**.

**GAME OVER** [36.15 *Code Pere Noel*; e.k.e. *Dial Code Santa Claus*] (Video Screens; 1989). John Hughes may have been the voice of my generation, but he didn't speak for me. And unless you were one of his two-dimensional characters he shouldn't have spoken for you either. Hughes was the mediocritty that walked like a man, a hack's hack whose emotionally dishonest films inevitably sympathized with the wifey, first-world problems of insufferable white suburbanites. Additionally, Hughes' former co-workers often described him as a grotesque man-baby who was prone to temper tantrums and wasn't above stealing credit from his collaborators or from ripping off much better movies. **GAME OVER** happens to be one of those movies. Released in France at the same time Hughes was vacationing there with his family and bearing more than just a passing resemblance to **HOME ALONE**,



the real and very pissed off Santa Claus. Opening with a tight close-up of a snowglobe getting smashed by a car, **GAME OVER** gleefully cuts through the treacle of most holiday movies. Not since Amicus' **TALES FROM THE CRYPT** movie has there been a Santa Claus as creepy and unsettling as the one seen here. Predatory and yet oddly sympathetic, Floessheim brings an unhinged intensity to the scenes where he dyes his hair and beard white with a can of spray paint (while giggling psychotically) and gains access to a car by bashing his forehead through the passenger side window. Unlike the wet bandits from **HOME ALONE**, the guy is a genuine threat and this time around it's actually fun to watch as a child uses various improvised weapons against a monstrous adult intruder (like the toy train modified into a bomb). Although clichéd and occasionally cutesy, **GAME OVER** is fun to watch mainly because it suggests what could have happened if John McTiernan directed **HOME ALONE**, instead of Chris Columbus.

**SCARY MOVIE** (1991). Regardless of what critics might have thought, **SCREAM** wasn't postmodern, deconstructionist or satirical. It was smug, kind of dumb and, like practically anything produced in the '90s, slathered with a heavy dollop of cheap irony. **SCREAM** didn't reinvent the slasher genre; it only made it more facile. What's the point of making your characters aware of the clichés that surround them when they still blindly adhere to them? And stuffing your movie with references to other movies doesn't make it smart; it makes it EPIC MOVIE. Yet, inexplicably, **SCREAM** is still revered in spite of the fact that it wasn't the best nor was it the first horror movie to go down the self-referential route. Rolf Kanetsky's **THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE** was a funnier and far more biting version of Kevin Williamson's lazy snarkfest, while Pete Portabella's **CUADECEC-VAMPIR** was more inventive and profound. But the best genre pesticide remains the least known. Daniel Erickson's **SCARY MOVIE** outmatches **SCREAM** on every level. It's subtle, it's clever, it's funny, and it's genuinely chilling. John Hawkes (who's currently best known for playing Kenny Powers' incredibly patient brother on **EASTBOUND AND DOWN**) plays a socially awkward, terminally nervous young man who is suffering from nightmares in which he's stalked by a sinister skull-faced figure. One night, while visiting a haunted house style attraction with his unlikely circle of friends, a van carrying a dangerous mental patient crashes into a ditch on a nearby dirt road. In the confusion, the mental patient makes his escape. With a re-election looming on the horizon, the town's sheriff tries to keep the escape under wraps but that proves to be difficult when an unidentified man in a skull mask is found lurking inside the haunted house. If all of this sounds achingly conventional, it is, at least for the first ten minutes. Once **SCARY MOVIE** establishes its premise and all of its attendant clichés, the film slowly starts to upend audience expectations.



For example, when the film introduces Hawkes' potential love interest — a tree-spirited bohemian girl — you start to dread the scenes where her crazy, care-free ways cause Hawkes to loosen up and grow more assertive. Thankfully, those scenes never come because once Hawkes awkwardly puts the moves on her, she becomes repulsed and disappears from the picture. SCARY MOVIE also boasts incredible set design (I loved the snake pit and

the mysterious room filled with pumpkins found inside the haunted house) as well as evocative and frequently beautiful cinematography. Granted, SCARY MOVIE is a bit slower paced than the average horror movie but it's also very rewarding. SCARY MOVIE is yet another barely-seen gem that doesn't deserve to languish in obscurity, nor does it deserve to share the same title as that terrible film that launched the careers of a thousand Wayans.

## ADAM GROVES; El Segundo, CA.

### IN AN OLD MANOR HOUSE OR THE INDEPENDENCE OF TRIANGLES [W Starym Dworze Czyli Niepodleglosc Trojkatow] (1985).

It's easy to be seduced by the sumptuous photography of this ostensible art film from Poland, but don't be fooled: it's very much a 3-am movie with all the trimmings! The setting is an aristocratic country manor in the early 1900's. There the aging patriarch catches his erstwhile son canoodling with his stepmother and shoots the woman, only to have her return not long afterward as a ghost (or something). Nobody seems especially startled by the woman's reappearance, and her stepson recommences their affair. Before long he grows fed up and shoots her dead (again), only to have the ground open up nearby and disgorge a twentyish young man. This latter is the son the parents never had with his stepmother, and the kid immediately makes himself at home in the manor — whose residents don't seem any more put out by this intrusion than they did when the young man's mother came back to life. But then the twice killed woman returns from the dead yet again and seduces her son, at which point the family's carefree existence is disrupted by the revolutionary fervor sweeping the country. Exactly what writer-director Andrzej Kotkowski was up to here is anyone's guess. Kotkowski's apparent aim was to craft a satirical portrait of Poland's aristocracy, yet the ghost/zombie business, involving an afterworld whose laws are as insanely complicated as any I've ever heard of, places the proceedings in another realm altogether (though definitely not a horrific one). Also, despite its seemingly weighty themes the film is pretty damn funny, and I'm not sure how much of the humor was intentional.

### CONVERSATION WITH A CUPBOARD MAN [Rozmowa Z Czlowiekiem Z Szafy] (1992).

Poland's Manusz Grzegorek made his feature debut with this stark adaptation of Ian McEwan's famed story "Conversation with a Cupboard Man." Impeccably visualized, the film centers on a winsome boy named Karol, raised by his demented mother (Bozena Adamek) to be a severely maladjusted man-child (Rafal Obrzyski) who struggles to fit into a society he doesn't understand. Karol finds employment in a restaurant kitchen where he's tormented incessantly by his asshole boss (INTERROGATION'S Adam Ferency), resulting in a horrific act of violence that irrevocably taints Karol's already hopeless existence. Grzegorek helms this grim account with a sure and confident hand that belies his amateur status. He also evinces a real flair for surrealism in the copious dream sequences wherein the protagonist's incestuous longings are laid bare. I don't blame him for feeling that way, as Bozena Adamek is ferociously seductive and commanding as Karol's twisted yet lovesick and misunderstood mother. Indeed, Adamek's performance so dominates the film's first half that her absence leaves a definite void in the second, when Karol leaves home and his ma is unaccountably killed off. I suspect many viewers will also be put off by the overall bleakness of the enterprise, but for those who can take it, CONVERSATION WITH A CUPBOARD MAN is a necessary evil that, despite its shortcomings, registers as a powerfully tragic, wildly hallucinatory and altogether impressive accomplishment.

### GRAFFITI (1985).

Juli Cortazar's dystopian parable "Graffiti" has inspired quite a few films over the years (YouTube is littered w/ 'em), but this Academy Award nominated mini-feature is far and away the best. A rich and inventive feast of visual storytelling related entirely without dialogue, GRAFFITI was directed and co-scripted by Matthew Patrick, of the Gary Busey thriller HIDER IN THE HOUSE and the criminally neglected cult film ATTRAPOS. In GRAFFITI, a young man (E.J. Castillo) resides in an unidentified South American locale run by a fascistic dictatorship. The young man strikes back at his oppressors by scrawling politically-minded drawings on walls, which are always painted over by authoritarian enforcers. This doesn't slow him down, although he is startled by the intrusion of a rival graffiti artist, a fetching young woman (Ivy Broya) who makes her own highly whimsical additions to the young man's drawings. The two commence a highly eccentric courtship expressed entirely through graffiti, but the fun and games are brought to a shocking halt when the woman is caught defac-



ing a wall and dragged off by authorities. Her would-be lover witnesses the arrest and becomes determined to make things right... but how? Over the course of this film's 26-minute running time Matthew Patrick succeeds in striking a good balance between political oppression and romantic yearning, and does so without an ounce of pretension. There's even a happy ending of sorts.

### THE PERFORMANCE FOR... [Predstavlenie Diya...]

[1993]. This Russian Surrealist fest opens with several sepietally dressed men and women walking through a vast desert. Many of the people drop dead during the walk, and as night falls a nondescript man carrying a piglet breaks off from his fellow. Upon witnessing a psychedelic lightshow in the sky, the man puts down the pig and removes a tiny bell from his mouth. He rings the bell and is suddenly thrust into a weird quasi-futuristic netherworld where trees grow downward from out of the sky, little girls ride tricycles bearing pointed spikes, and people have a tendency to unexpectedly break into operatic wails. The understandably bewildered protagonist finds himself living in a big city apartment from which authorities remove an unidentified corpse, and where a long-haired wing is placed on the protagonist's head in readiness

for some kind of theatrical performance. We never actually see the performance in question, but are made privy to the events leading up to it, which take place in a gaudily designed theater. There a Vampire-like femme fatale does her damndest to seduce the protagonist, a train runs through the stage and a pistol packing sniper waits in the wings. We also get sepia-toned footage of an Eskimo kid performing rope tricks(?) before the protagonist opens a door that leads back to the desert where everything began. I really wish I could go into more depth about the particulars of the narrative, but the lack of subtitles renders that impossible. I can, however, report that the film is as arrestingly bizarre as just about anything you'll see, even if the budget was evidently quite scant. The director was Yuri Kiyashko, who has a real flair for off-kilter visuals, and the art direction was

always dazzling to look at.

1 (2008). From Hungary, a highly cultish science fiction drama that was loosely based on the Stanislaw Lem novel One Human Minute, although the reality-bending fiction of Philip K. Dick appears to have been an equivalent influence. The film fits in well with recent sci-fi head-scrappers like PRIMEUR and INCEPTION, although 1 is brainier and more convoluted than either, requiring a lot higher-than-average amount of intellectual participation on the part of its viewers (which probably explains why the film hasn't caught on in America). It concerns a set of thick books entitled "I" that purport to explain what every person in the world is doing in the space of a single minute. The progressive bookstore selling the books is raided by an authoritarian organization that dub's itself the Reality Defense Institute, whose agents quarantine the store's staff and question them endlessly about who wrote "I" and how the writer got his information. The questioning invariably devolves into lengthy philosophical discourses on the nature of reality, while writer-director Peter Sparrow punctuates the chatter with documentary montages illustrating the various issues the books in question explore — namely life, death and everything in between.

I won't pretend to have understood everything in this film, but was impressed by the audacity of the narrative, which encompasses politics and speculation in a free-form manner that's compelling and uniquely its own.



**ANNA PUCHALSKI:** Jersey City, NJ.  
**PHANTOM FLYING SHIP** (*Sora tobu Yūreisen*) (*All Clues No Solutions*; 1969). Directed by Hiroshi Iikedo, this brief animated film clocks in at a bare hour but packs in as many robots, monsters and killer soda popes as it can. Our hero Hayato is a middle-school-aged boy with a Scooby-Doo-esque companion named Jack (who carries a Doramean-esque bag around his neck). He's out fishing with his mother and father when they witness a car accident and investigate. It turns out the victims are the married owners of the company which employs Hayato's father! The wife recovers, but Hayato's father insists they take his boss to the nearest shelter — a haunted house! It seems that a skeletal sea captain is haunting the wealthy couple, looking for revenge for his untimely death. Quite randomly, the next day while sitting in a traffic jam, Hayato, his father and Jack the dog are nearly crushed by tanks that show up to wage war with a giant robot. Father is injured, and upon arriving home he finds mother has been killed when the house collapsed on her. Father follows shorly, but not before revealing that Hayato is not their natural born child, but washed up like floaties when he was three years old. Hayato and Jack move in with the owner of the company, but something just isn't right with these people! Also, the robot and the ghost ship face off with missiles for no apparent reason. To Hayato's dismay, his new foster family is involved, and if the company need is controlling the robot, then he is also responsible for the deaths of Hayato's natural parents. Plus what is it with that addictive new soft drink? The company makes that too, and it seems to be making people dissolve! Holy cow, is that a giant lobster? Antics ensue. Notable mainly because of the involvement of a young (28-year-old) Hayao Miyazaki, this Boys Adventure style tale from Tezuka's animation branch features exactly the kind of detailed art you might expect from a project in which Miyazaki was both key animator and concept artist — mixed with the typically stunted animation of the era. Vehicles and scenery are drawn with care while the characters smack of the Tezuka style so popular in the sixties. While the story goes through the usual tropes (Cute girl Loser parent!), it is also pretty brutal — a stark contrast to Hanna-Barbera cartoons in the US at the same time. As always, an underlying theme of ecology permeates an otherwise pedestrian plot. An interesting distraction in the career of an animation icon.



**THE BLUE BIRD** (Video Screens; 1976). The Blue Bird is a classic fairy tale created by Maurice Maeterlinck as a play and first performed in 1908 in Russia, after which it became a regional classic. This filmed version of it is most notable for having been the first attempt at a US/USSR co-production. Shot in Russia with a primarily Soviet crew, a bevy of American top-billed stars and Oscar-winning director George Cukor at the helm, to call this a troubled shoot is a massive understatement... When Tytyl (Todd Lookinland, brother to BRANDY BUNCH sibling Mika) and Myryl (Patsy Kensit, future LETHAL WEAPON II co-star and lead singer of the Brit pop band Eighth Wonder) anger their mother (Elizabeth Taylor) by going down



JANE FONDA, CECILY TYSON  
 WILL GEEK, (top right)  
 NINA PAVLOVA, (bottom left)  
 PAUL GARDNER  
 ERIC WATERSHAW  
 ALFRED HAYES, MAUREEN MITCHELL, CLAUDIO RIVAROLI

to the river on their own, they are sent to bed without supper. In the night they hear music and fireworks, go out to investigate (despite already having been punished) and meet an old hag (Elizabeth Taylor) who demands they give her "the bird which is blue!" The young siblings offer the family pet, a sedated dove dyed a sickly pale blue, but this isn't quite a blue enough bird for her. She wants a proper blue bird, and demands the children help her — with the assistance of a magic hat which reveals the hog to actually be an embodiment of Light (Ms. Taylor, again) who proceeds to anthropomorphize everything in the cottage. Fire and Water become ballet dancers (*Yevgeny* Shcheglov and Valentina Ganibolska of The Leningrad Kirov Ballet), a loaf of Bread becomes an old man, Mik is a lovely maiden. Faithful dog Tylo becomes giddy cat Tytelle morphs into Cecily Tyson in a spandex, hooded body-suit. The children then set out on their journey for the Blue Bird of Happiness, going first to the Land of the Past where they visit with their dear grandparents. Any morbid undertone is lost between the high-school-production level sets and the glowing, blond, toothy smiles of Tytyl and Myryl. The cat threatens villainy but this toned down interpretation of the story fails to make even the Castle of the Night, or Night herself (Jane Fonda) terribly frightening. The Night segments have the best potential to be interesting; Tytyl unleashes a bunch of ghosts, nearly lets out the spirit of War, and ends up in a psychedelic garden filled with oversized plants and blue-dyed pigeons. (In one of the better ballet segments, we get a full dance number from Nadezhda Pavlova as the Blue Bird.) They gather birds by the handful only to discover that they are all dead! Despondent, they continue their search for the real thing. Shortly after a scene in which Myryl clutches an actual dead bird and cries what can only assume are real tears considering the circumstances, Ava Gardner shows up in a turban as Luxury and seduces Tytyl, leaving only Light and Myryl on the true path. In true fairy tale style, with each encounter the children learn a lesson, only to find their journey leads them home. Robert Mowry wraps up the English speaking cast as Father Time, surrounded by cherubic young actors in the Land of the Future... Did that sound watchable? It's not. Every ounce of entertainment has been leached out of this mess. A mix of weird sets, bad costumes, triteley songs, and bloated casting, this international production cost a fortune — which I can only assume was spent on the stars since it clearly didn't go to the production values. It has some hint of the surreal look of Soviet and Eastern Bloc cinema of the '60s, but without any of the artistry. Tyson at least seems into her female role, and gives it more dedication than it deserves. Taylor wears more makeup than of all the women in Russia combined, masking her the least believable movie peasant ever. Apparently she very proudly did all of her own make-up for the film. It shows, Jane Fonda is so flat she may as well have been doing a cold read of the script off cue cards. The musical aspect of the film is cringe-inducing to say the least. The Russian actors are dubbed, badly at times, but for the most part have limited lines anyway, being ballet dancers. Speaking of ballet, it even fails to deliver on that front. Mostly the dancing members of the cast just sort of flail in and out of the English speakers, who look too wrung out to pay attention. Their lack of energy, or even acting, might be partially blamed on the horrid conditions the actors endured. Poor food, poor living conditions and numerous on-set problems plagued every aspect of the shoot. The whole thing has the feel of a filmed play, and much of the direction is so static it may as well have been. One wonders if the Russian language cut of the film feels as neutered. Poor George Cukor, what a note to and a career on — he only made one more film before his death.

#### BRETT TAYLOR: Wartburg, TN.

**THE DELTA FOX** (1977). The hostage who falls in love with her kidnapper. A professional criminal betrayed by his boss. The man on the run who can't be tamed down. A hero out to avenge his brother's death. A big man named "Tiny." A deadly set-up. Is there any cliché left out of *THE DELTA FOX*? When someone says "Nothing's ever happens around here," you just know something exciting is about to happen. Eventually anyway. An action-thriller from Beverly and Fred Sebastian, a husband and wife writing/producing/directing team who found enough success with *THE SINGLE GIRLS* and *GATOR BAIT* to have their own production company, Sebastian International Pictures, *THE DELTA FOX* features Richard Lynch as the title character, a whiskey running stock car driver turned transporter of illegal funds, though he receives the indigni-

ty of being billed fifth in the credits. Assigned by criminal bigwig Stuart Whitman to make a delivery of one million dollars, the Fox races along the Miami roads in a Camero — a brown Camaro, as characters are continually pointing out — then through New Orleans in a sporty Porsche. Lynch gets into one violent scrap after another, yet still has time to find romance with kooky blonde landscaper engineer Priscilla Barnes. Actually, "blonde" is kind of redundant here, as the Sebastians favor the fair-haired looks, from Lynch to Richard Jaeckel in a too-brat role. Even the vehicles have a yellow tint, from Barnes' Ford pickup to supposedly brown Camaro. *THE DELTA FOX* gets off to a fast start but slows to an idle about the time the Fox pulls into Louisiana. Lynch was an actor with a slightly raspy voice, spooky eyes and a rather elian appearance, and thus an unlikely choice for an action hero. No



one laughs less convincingly than him. But then his loveable character isn't meant to be especially sympathetic. Indeed, THE DELTA FOX gives the impression of being modeled on Peckinpah's bleak on-the-run movies THE GETAWAY and BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA. So in this light Lynch's casting makes more sense. He certainly has the hunted look down. Stalwart support is provided by John Ireland with typical staunch authoritarianism and Whitman with amusing swingin'-seventies demeanor. Throw in big bald baddie Julius W. Harris and you have a perfect exploitation cast. What the hell, throw in the Sebastian's son as a gas station attendant too. The Sebastians certainly knew that shoot-outs made for exciting viewing, though the dialogue scenes are less so. The movie proved viable enough to be picked up by an outfit called, I kid you not, I.U.D. (Independent United Distributors), and then by the slightly more famous Paramount. THE DELTA FOX was still being hyped as a prime-time attraction on the USA Network in the late-eighties. The movie is proof that men will like anything so long as it has fast cars and machine gun battles. I liked it, but then I am a man. THE DELTA FOX is peppered with unnecessary computer generated exposition titles that presumably looked "up to date" in 1977 and marred by a repetitive piano theme and dated electronic score that puts one in mind of seventies television.

**SUNSET COVE (1978)**: Give Al Adamson, one of the all-time lousiest directors, this much credit: At least, late in his career, he learned how to make his movies less boring. You can't say that for Larry Buchanan or Andy Milligan. SUNSET COVE at least outpaces previous Adamson entries like BLOOD OF GHASTLY HORROR and BLOOD OF DRACULA'S CASTLE, skin-crawling epics of monumental tedium. An attempt to emulate the teenage sleaziness of Crown International Pictures on perhaps an even lower budget, SUNSET COVE particularly resembles the popular THE VAN bycentering on the same type of vehicle, here known by the name "the complete VAN". Leading the cops on a chase, promiscuous sex, underage drinking, getting expelled from

high school, taking compromising pictures of a mayoral candidate — it's all a hilarious romp. If you're one of the California kids in the pseudo-Crown world, Did girls ever really go by names like "Bubble" and "Pig Iron"? Was it ever really this easy to insult the cops and somehow evade arrest? Somehow I doubt it. Get ready for hand-gilding, skimpy bathing suits worn by girls who vaguely resemble Farrah Fawcett, musical montages set to terrible music, pasty white skin, expressions like "Show it", "Knock yourself out," and "Up yours," occasional male and female nudity, three way sex in the back of a van, and less than Academy Award-caliber acting. And remember, fat people are always good for a laugh. But all is not as frivolous as it seems, for cartoon villains are preparing to turn the kids' favorite beach into a high-rise condominium development. So the local beach-going youngsters take to City Hall to fight these clownish developers. Luckily one of their number is a budding law student and winner of the Clark Kent look-alike contest. Soon the cry of "Save Our Beach" fills the air and a very faint glimmer of sixties activism is evoked amidst the otherwise innocent and freewheeling antics. And, in the midst of a sea of actors you've never seen before or again, Adamson still finds time to drag in his favorite low-cost character actor, John Carradine, to play an aged law expert with a whisky grey goatee. Yes, when you want an actor who can lend casual gravitas to phrases like "fraudulent misuse of tax monies," there's nobody more reliable than Carradine. Plus there's the distracting presence of a judge who resembles a cross between Dick Smothers and an old, confused Edgar Allan Poe. I imagine any pot smoking kids who saw this film must have been disappointed by the way it petered out in a series of courtroom debates on the legality of sales of public domain property. Know who else must have been disappointed? Cinematographer Gary Graver, who previously worked with Orson Welles. Well, at least he was still working. And considering how unattractive he makes the beach look, I'm not sure he deserved better.

### CAN THE BEACH BUNNIE BRIGADE

—Need my Beach Bunnies!  
STOP THE DREADED  
CONDOMINIUM MACHINET

SAVE OUR BEACH!



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# "If You Don't Fly Off the Cliff, What's the Point?": An Interview With **STEVE RAILSBACK**

By ANTHONY PETKOVICH

Steve Railsback loves taking chances — kind of like a stunt man, actually.

In fact, Railsback might have found it easy to consistently portray maniacs and creeps during his over-40-year career in movies and on television. But he refused to be typecast. Instead, he quite laudably preferred mixing it up, journeying down different paths as a performer.

But, hey, that's not to shortchange Railsback in terms of his wealth of wonderfully weird and out-there characters. Early strange roles in *THE VISITORS* (1972) and *COCKFIGHTER* (1974) basically set the stage for future freakazoids. In *THE VISITORS*, director Elia Kazan's penultimate flick and Steve's first-ever, the actor plays a vengeful Vietnam vet who, very subtly — up to the story's violent climax — terrorizes his former commanding officer, played by James Woods. In *COCKFIGHTER* he's a greasy weasel or a cheetah who receives his just desserts from the movie's temporarily self-mutated protagonist, Warren Oates. Of course, for many viewers, Railsback is best known for his chilling portrait of crazed cult leader Charles Manson in *HELTER SKELTER* (1976). He's similarly incredible in the classic second season *X FILES* episode "Duane Barry" (1994), wherein he guest stars as a man plagued — to the point of becoming homicidal — by disturbing memories (or are they visions?) of horrific alien abduction.

My own favorite Railsback role is his rendition of infamous Wisconsin murderer/body snatcher (and inspiration for *PSYCHO* and *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*) in the eponymous *ED GEIN* (2000). During the course of the highly underrated movie, Railsback boldly delves into the dark mind and soul of Gein, delivering a multi-faceted but no less haunting sketch; definitely a coup for the gifted actor, in that he manages to make the cold-blooded killer seem pitiable and almost (yikes!) likable.

Yet after *HELTER SKELTER*, Railsback made a distinct effort to break away from strictly playing twisted antagonists. Two good early examples are his more sympathetic parts in *ANGELA* (1978), as a love-starved mish-mash alongside such legends as Sophia Loren and John Huston; and the TV mini-series *FROM HERE TO ETERNITY* (1979) — starring Natalie Wood, Kim Basinger and William Devane — with Railsback as the relatively low-key, at times rebellious, ultimately tragic Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt.

He also produced his fair share of straight-out heroes in the '80s. Perhaps not from the school of clenched-jawed acting, but nonetheless... There was astronaut Colonel Tom Carlsen, spellbound by a gorgeous female space vampire, while simultaneously fighting plague-spreading beasts in *LIFEFORCE* (1985); hardened police detective Jim Bishop going toe-to-talon with a mutated, oversized, Petri-dish-created insect-monster in *BLUE MONKEY* (1987); and desperate truck driver Johnny Davis, hired to transport damned souls to Hell in "Dead Run," one of the better episodes

from the new *TWILIGHT ZONE* (1988).

And what about anti-heroes? Enter *THE STUNT MAN* (1980). Undoubtedly Railsback's most famous commercial feature, *STUNT MAN* concerns escaped convict "Cameron" (Railsback) who, while fleeing from the law, finds himself on the location-set of a WWI movie and, in the guise

This past summer, I met with Steve at Studio City's iconic Sportsmen's Lodge, where I'd previously interviewed his peer Bo Hopkins. Railsback is a fun guy, who jokes and laughs a lot. But at times he can also get pretty intense, especially when discussing his craft. Over grilled cheese sandwiches and ice tea, we spoke for several hours in the Lodge's bustling coffee shop about Railsback's life, many of his standout movies and various other topics, including (look out!) Bo Hopkins.

**SHOCK CINEMA:** We interviewed your compatriot Bo Hopkins here at the Sportsmen's Lodge several months back. Got a message for him, Steve?

Steve Railsback: [Laughs] Well, I'd like to say negative things about Bo, but that's impossible. He's one of the great people and one of my closest friends. We've had a lot of laughs. Actually, did I tell you about my class? This relates to Bo... I take no more than 10 students because of what Kazan and Lee gave me. They believed in me for some reason, and I love giving back. That's really what it's all about. Besides, I'd feel like a real prick if I didn't give anything back.

Anyhow, I remember this one night in class when one of my students started talking about Bo Hopkins. And I said, "What about Bo?" And the guy said, "Oh God, I loooove Bo Hopkins. I just think he's the best thing that ever lived." So I picked up my phone, called Bo, and said, "Bo!" — and the guy suddenly went like this [mouth drops open, eyes bug] — "There's a student in my class who's gonna wet his pants if he doesn't talk to ya." I'm just joking here. I really didn't say "wet his pants." Bo said, "Oh yeah? Well, put him the hell on." "Okay." And the kid was so crazy about Bo, that he takes the phone and is like [nervously] "B-B-B-Bo Hopkins?..."

And when the kid finally finishes talking to Bo, I get on the phone and tell him, "Bo, I just don't know what it is these people see in you." [cracks up] You gotta understand how much I love him. He's one of the classiest people in the world.

**SC:** He's definitely good people. Now, in one of your first movies, Monte Hellman's *COCKFIGHTER*, you had a short but highly memorable part as a cheating gambler. Let's talk about that one.

Railsback: I respected Monte. We filmed that scene on a farm in Georgia. It was during my drinkin' days. Warren [Oates] and I became buddies — and stayed buddies. When I finished my scene, he took me to the airport, and as he's dropping me off, he hands me a paper bag and says, "Take this on the plane with ya, budvy." I'm like, "Damn... what?..." It was a half pint of sloe gin. Back then '74, you could take things like that on airplanes.

You know, there's a lot of scum in this business — and they may outnumber the good people. But I've met some of the most incredible people whom I wouldn't have otherwise known if I wasn't



Steve Railsback in *LIFEFORCE*

of a stunt double, spends the majority of the bizarre story trying to discern between fantasy and reality — which includes dealing with the movie's eccentric director, Eli Cross (Peter O'Toole), who delights in placing Cameron in one outrageous, life-threatening scene/situation after another. Director Richard Rush's tour-de-force — an impossible-to-categorize blend of action, comedy, satire, romance, mystery, and even horror — is also one of the actor's own favorite accomplishments.

The point is, whether playing killer or crusader, maniac or martyr, Railsback never plays it safe. Rather, he enjoys experimenting with and tackling a wide spectrum of on-screen personas.

Born in Dallas, Texas, and raised in Witchita Falls, Railsback knew early on as a kid that he wanted to act. After moving to New York as a young man, he eventually became a member of the illustrious Actors Studio, studying with such legends as Lee Strasberg and Elia Kazan. Today, in his late-60's, Steve is still actively working in the profession and shows no signs of slowing down. Additionally, he's teaching classes and making plans to direct a new movie, *BARSTOW*, penned by his late brother Philip and starring Scott (in *COLD BLOOD*) Wilson.

in this business. Warren was one of 'em. He was one of the nicest, sweetest people you'd ever want to meet in your life.

**SC:** You mentioned drinking. How long did that last?

Railsback: A year-and-a-half or so. Maybe more. But Kazan wouldn't allow me to self-destruct. I could be dead right now. I mean, I was wallowing in the shit. But he wouldn't let go. I loved the man.

**SC:** We're definitely gonna talk about Kazan, but let's go back a bit. What was it like being raised in Wichita Falls?

Railsback: Great place to grow up in — and a great place to leave. The reason I say that is because I wanted to be an actor since I was about nine, and I knew early on that I wanted to go to New York to study. Everybody has dreams. And what takes courage is taking those dreams and walking into the unknown. I didn't go to New York to be a star. I went there to study. And things just happened.

**SC:** Why acting?

Railsback: I'll give you an example. As a kid, when I'd see movies like *HUD*, I thought, "How did Paul Newman get to those places?" That's what fascinated me. Newman... Brando... Jack Lemmon and Lee Remick in *DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES*... I just wanted to know where they were coming from, if they were, in fact, coming from somewhere, or if they were they just acting.

And when I was 14, I was looking at teachers like Lee Strasberg, and I went to this college in our town called Midwestern University and bought *An Actor Prepares* by Stanislavski. I read it and forgot about it over the years. And when my mother passed away about six years ago, she'd saved it for me in a box. Now I have it on my shelf. I looked at the things which I underlined in pencil — they were still there — and it told me certain things about myself. My mother was a great lady. She taught me never to hold any prejudices. She opened up so many doors for me.

**SC:** And your father; from what I've read, was an oil man.

Railsback: My dad, who's also passed now, was actually what's called a land man. He had a partner who was a geologist, and they had a little office. My father would be the one who'd lease the land from the farmer groups to drill on it, and the geologist would find out if there was oil. It was a two-business deal. Back then, there were still a lot of independent oil people.

My dad managed to raise six boys on \$30,000 a year. It doesn't sound like much now, but back then it was upper middle-class.

**SC:** So what kind of a kid were you in Wichita?

Railsback: I was like a Rockwell painting: came from a small town... went crawdaddy fishing with my dad and five other brothers... We also had a Daisy Queen in our town, which is where you'd drive around when you were in high school and see if you could find any girls to show off that you're driving. [laughs] I guess I was somewhat of an extrovert. Kind of like the class clown.

**SC:** And what happened when you finally went to New York to pursue your dream of becoming an actor?

Railsback: When I first landed in New York, I stayed at the Hotel Lucerne for a week. It was very cheap. And the first morning I woke up, I looked in



Patricia Joyce and Railsback in *THE VISITORS*

the yellow pages under "ID" for "Drama" or "IT" for "Theatre." I was looking for an institute where I could study. And I found a place on the eighth floor of Carnegie Hall. So I went there and his name was Walter Lott. I recall an exercise where they said, "Okay everybody in class, there's been a plane crash." Stuff like that.

But fate can really play a huge part in life. See, on the 10th floor of Carnegie Hall, just two floors up from where I was, Lee Strasberg had his private classes. Everybody went to him. McQueen, Pacino... He'd just pick 25 people. So I'd go up there and listen through the door. Finally Lee's secretary Walter Lott — a member of The Actor's Studio who also had a big impact on my life — came up to me and said, "I notice that you've been listening for the past few days. You're really not supposed to do that. Let me tell you what you have to do to get in," he said. "Hire somebody take a snapshot of you and write a letter stating why you want to study with Lee Strasberg."

I can't remember exactly what I said in the letter, but I know it came from my heart because his secretary soon called and said, "Lee would like to meet with you." So I met with Strasberg at his townhouse on the Upper West Side, and he accepted me to his class: March 5, 1968. Thirty dollars a month. A lot of money in those days. And eventually Walter Lott said, "I have a workshop which I'd love you to be in." And I ended up doing 12 plays at the Unit Theatre, which seated about 40 people.

**SC:** How did you support yourself at the time?

Railsback: I was a messenger... worked in the rug business... worked for a coffee company... My brother Mike, along with Richard Lynch and myself had two vans, and we called ourselves The Golden Fleet. [laughs] We did moving jobs. We'd advertise in *The Village Voice*, and you can imagine what great movers we were. [laughs] We tried. But sometimes carrying furniture down flights of stairs... I mean, the bottoms of sofas might occasionally break open, and we'd try to put 'em back together. But they were good days back in '68.



Railsback, director Eli Kazan and James Woods on the set of *THE VISITORS*

told me about you, so I want to meet. When are you coming back to New York?" "Tonight," I said. "No, come back on Friday," he said. "I'll be watching the ball games. Spend New Year's with your family." And he gave me his phone number.

So I called him on Friday when I got in. "Meet me in my office on Saturday," he said. He had an office on Broadway. I didn't know what to wear, so I borrowed a sports jacket from somebody and some shoes. So I knock on his door. Kazan answers, he's wearing fatigues, and he looks at me and — I'll never forget this — goes, "Railsback?" "Yeah," Kazan. You don't wear that all the time do you?" I said, "No, no, I —" "Come on in and sit down." We ended up talking for three hours. He did that with everybody because, if he hired them, he wanted to know about them. We talked about my mother, my father, my childhood,

**SC:** Unfortunately, Richard Lynch is no longer with us.

Railsback: I know. He was a very close friend.

**SC:** So when did *The Golden Fleet* dissolve completely?

Railsback: Well, half of it dissolved that day on 57th Street. [laughs] We just eventually decided to give it up. But, yeah, I did all kinds of menial jobs.

What really changed my life, though, was when I was home in Dallas for Christmas in 1970. First time I'd been home in three-and-a-half years. Thursday was New Year's Eve, Friday was New Year's Day, and Wednesday, out of the blue, I get this call. I said, "Hello," and a male voice on the other end asks, "Is Steve Railsback there?" "Yeah, this is him." And the voice said, "This is Kazan from New York." "Okay, who is this really?" because I honestly thought it was one of my friends kidding around. And he said, "Don't bust your balls over this: It's Kazan from New York." Then he said, "Look, I'm doing this small picture, and somebody

high-school girlfriends... Everything. He knew so much about me that, when he hired me, he'd just whisper words in my ear to get a certain reaction from me in a scene.

**SC:** Tell us about this Kazan movie, *THE VISITORS*.

Railsback: It came from a true story that his son Chris read, and he just changed the names. Great man. He passed, too. But EK — that's what I used to call Kazan — and Chris wanted the story to focus on people coming back from battle.

**SC:** Where did you film *THE VISITORS*?

Railsback: During the winter on Kazan's 150-acre farm in Connecticut. He had two homes on it. Swimming pool. Tennis court. He bought it in 1938. Trees. Forest. Beautiful. And when EK passed away, the kids signed off on it. He donated it to the state. It's now a state park.

That movie changed my life in the sense that, all of a sudden, every agency wanted me. Before *THE VISITORS*, I didn't even have an agent. It was Jimmy Woods' first picture, too. The movie was a great experience because Kazan was one of the greatest actor-directors that ever lived. He never spoke in generalities. Everything was a specific. And as I say, Kazan would whisper words in my ear. Sometimes he would. Sometimes he wouldn't. He might whisper something to you, then he'd whisper something totally different to me.

I'll give you an example. I drove to the movie location one day. It was cold. And Kazan is leaning against this car. So I go over and ask him, "What's going on, EK? What's the matter?" And he says, "I don't know. I just been thinking. That fucking Woods — we had a dinner scene coming up — I think he's fucking Patricia Joyce [Woods' wife in the movie]. I just getting a little tired of him." By the time Kazan finished, I was convinced of there being a problem and went inside. I didn't know it at the time, but when Jimmy arrived, Kazan said to him, "That fuckin' Railsback..." And he told him the same thing. It basically added tension to the dinner scene we filmed shortly afterwards.

**SC:** Obviously Kazan was very good at manipulating his actors.

Railsback: Well, of course he was. Look at the great actors he discovered. James Dean. Warren Beatty. Brando, obviously. Montgomery Clift. Kazan saw James Dean in a play, and said, "That's him." So he put Dean in *EAST OF EDEN*.

**SC:** When we talked on the phone and set up this interview, you mentioned that you started hearing voices in your head around this time, Railback: Okay. I had gotten into The Studio in '71. And one day I was walking from 8th to 9th, heading for The Studio, which is between 9th and 10th. I was going to do a scene. And before I hit the end of 8th Avenue to cross 9th, for the first time in my life, I heard voices — and then I knew what fear was. I became so scared, because the voices told me, "They're going to be expecting something. Everybody's going to be expecting something. Don't let 'em down. You better watch yourself. You better." I can't remember the exact things but...

I mean, we all have voices which tell us to do something or not to do something. We also have demons. And you gotta stomp on 'em and kill 'em. For me it lasted a year-and-a-half. At times, I was drinking until four in the morning... Now, when I say voices, I don't mean voices literally. I mean voices in the sense that they help you realize something; where you're given a certain kind of internal or psychological warning sign.

But I remember Kazan used all kinds of love to help me get rid of the voices; like when he threw me up against the staircase at his house. If

you up to now?" Well, they want me to play Manson in this movie. I don't know..." For some stupid reason I mentioned typecasting. He said, "Don't worry about that. It's just a Hollywood term. So who's directing the movie?" "A guy named Tom Gries." "Hmmm... Gries... Gries... No... I don't know... Oh, my God! Tom Gries?" "You gotta do it!" "The guy's incredible! He's phenomenal! Do it! Come to my office and we'll go through the script page by page, but you gotta do it!" I said, "EK, my God, if you feel like that, I'm doing it." So we hung up, and I immediately called Tom and said, "I want to do it. I want to do it."

Six weeks later, we're at Warner Brothers, at the stage that was built for the trial, and Tom Gries and I are sitting together talking, and he starts laughing. I said, "What are you laughing about?" "Did Kazan call you?" he asked me. I said, "About this movie? Yeah." What happened is, when I turned down the Manson role, Tommy called Kazan to see if he could get me to do the part. Then Kazan called me and, as I say, was going on and on as if he didn't know who Tom Gries was. And all of a sudden... he remembered! [laughs] But thank God for Kazan. And he was right — Tommy was a special man.

**SC:** How did you prepare for the role of Charles Manson?

Railsback: Of course, I read the book [*Helter Skelter*, the 1974 true-crime book about

the Manson Family murders, written by Curt Gentry and prosecuting attorney Vincent Bugliosi]. But it was a very simple process, actually: You always take a negative and make it a positive. In other words, when you're playing a character like Manson, you have to think, "I'm right. They're wrong."

**SC:** You have to approach the character as if he's completely justified in what he's done.

Railsback: Well, we've all justified things to ourselves. You've justified things. I've justified things. That's why everyone in prison says they're innocent. Whether they deserve to be imprisoned or not is not the point. In their minds, they're innocent. And in that same respect, you cannot play a negative. If I'm going to play Charles Manson as a mean or bad person, what's the point? How can I show colors? — only if I'm playing him as a positive. And, in my mind, that's who I made the speech to. Two people whom I knew in New York.

**SC:** Who were these two people?

Railsback: I had a bad relationship with one of them — who was close to Kazan, by the way. The other person would have loved to bring me down. And he tried, which is why I wanted to tell him something in that speech. So in my mind, I gave the speech in the courtroom to those two people.

**SC:** I read that you locked yourself in a closet for two hours every day to prepare for the role of Manson. Is that true?

Railsback: Manson had been in and out of institutions from the time he was 11 until he was 33 in '67. He was cut a month here, out a month there... If you add up the months, during that entire span of time, he was only out of prison for a total of one year. So he was incarcerated for over 20 years.



With Christina Hart and Nancy Wolfe in *HELTHER SKELTER*

was his six-story Brownstone in Connecticut. He was coming down the staircase, I was going up, and he just threw me up against the wall, pounded on my shoulders and shouted, "Don't let 'em do it to ya! You've got it! You've got it! You've got it!" And afterwards he just walked down the stairs. I realized what he was saying to me later. He was saying, "Don't let anybody take your talent away. Voices. People. Smide remarks. Anything." He was telling me that I had the talent. He got me back on that cliff, but then I had to dive. And I dove. He was always there for me.

**SC:** How did *HELTHER SKELTER* enter the picture?

Railsback: I actually came out here to California for *HELTHER SKELTER*. I'd just closed on Broadway, and they were casting the movie, which would be shot from October through December of '75. My agent got me in the door. And when I went in and read the courtroom speech for *HELTHER SKELTER*, it was from the actual courtroom transcript, so you had to speak every word on the page. There were a lot of people who wanted that role, too. Something like three or four hundred people. Marty Sheen wanted to do it. And when they offered the part to me, I said, "I have to think about it. I don't know if I want to do it." It wasn't an ego trip. I wasn't off the ground and being cocky. But I had such an extreme confidence in myself, that anything could happen on a stage. And it did. I was just at a creative high, at a peak.

So about four days later, I get a call and it's Kazan's long-time secretary Phyllis. "Steve, Mr. Kazan would like to talk to you," she said. He was out here directing *De Niro* in *THE LAST TYCOON*. So when I called EK, the first thing he asked me was, "So, how did the play go?" "Fine. It went great." Then he said, "Okay. So what are

I did lock myself in a closet. Not every day, though. I went into the closet for 45 minutes and turned out the lights to see what would happen — and I'd talk. Since Manson was in institutions for so long, that's the only reason I did it: to feel isolation. And I don't know if I did.

As I said, I read the book. And I figured Manson was a methodical, manipulative human being. They asked me if I wanted to meet him. I said "No," because if I'm sitting there talking to him, he could manipulate me into thinking he's a certain kind of person. And I didn't want any part of that. I didn't want his input. I couldn't trust it.

But they gave me tapes of Manson singing and tapes of him being interviewed. So I listened to see if I could hear any contradictions. And, again, I also used my imagination. I made a negative into a positive. If you think for one second that Manson thought he was the problem, you're wrong. And if you ask me what I think of the character while I'm developing it and acting it out, I'm not going to tell you until afterwards. I don't judge a character. I can't judge a character.

I'm very proud of that speech in the courtroom. It just happened — and it wouldn't have happened again if we tried it 10 more times. I remember I walked up to sit in the witness chair and said to Tommy, "Watch me on this one, because I don't know what's gonna happen." And then I sat down. It was a three-camera shot. And I remember after sitting down, I talked into the mike and said, "Listen, can everybody please sit because I have something I have to say." And then everybody sat down. I had something I had to say to those two people. And about 20 seconds later, Tommy called "Action!" And I let out so much pent-up stuff about what right do they have to do that to any human being. We did it in one take. It was in the transcript, but I'm telling ya, it wouldn't have happened again. Usually things like that don't happen in first takes. The speech ended when I stood up. And I got a lot of my chest with it.

**SC:** Did you ever meet HELTER SKELTER's co-author, Vincent Bugliosi?

Railsback: Yeah. He's an asshole. I'll tell you something, and this is the truth. He did one of the worst no-no's you can do. He called George DiCenzo at home. George [who played Bugliosi in the movie] is a wonderful man and a terrific actor. And Bugliosi called him up and told him what he thought George was doing wrong while playing him in the movie. Now, you just don't do that to an actor, otherwise how can he be objective about what he's doing? It's bullshit.

When George came on the set the next day, he mentioned it to Tommy and, boy, Tommy just stood at that stage door walin' for Bugliosi, who came to the set everyday. Well, I wanna tell you something, I was 10 feet away, and when Bugliosi walked on the set — Tommy is a big guy, too... wears a cowboy hat — he looked at Bugliosi... Bugliosi looked at him... and Tommy just said, "Get off my set. Don't ever come back. You fucked with my actor. Don't you ever come back." And he



Railsback and Sophia Loren  
in ANGELA

didn't. That was Tommy. And he was right. Bugliosi is all ego. It was absolutely wrong what he did to George.

**SC:** Once HELTER SKELTER aired, were you worried about being typecast?

Railsback: That was an excuse not to do it. I was just feeling so creative. But after HELTER SKELTER came out... You couldn't get ratings like that today because these days there are 500 channels. Back then, there were two independent channels, along with CBS, NBC and ABC. There were about 105 million people who watched it.

When SKELTER came out, it was the highest rated show in the history of television at that time. It's still like the third or fourth. But afterwards I was offered, almost, and I'm not kidding you, without exception, every killer in town, whether it was television or theatrical. Every killer — because they like to pigeonhole people. I turned 'em down and didn't work for a year. Of course, if you turned something down back then, they just thought you wanted more money. So they'd offer you more money. I quickly realized that I owned the chicken ranch, if you know what I'm saying. But I would have no career today if I took those parts. And thank God, FROM HERE TO ETERNITY came around.

**SC:** Tell us a little about playing the role of Prewitt in that TV mini-series.

Railsback: The thing about Prewitt is that the Army was his family. It was the only family he ever knew. At one point in the story, I'm living with Kim Basinger's character at her place, because I wanted to be with her. But when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurs, I come running back to the base. And the military sentries see me running and say, "Who goes there?" or whatever. I try to get away from 'em, and they shoot. And I researched how the bullet would throw me back while I was running. Tiny little details like that make a difference. So I talked to a gun expert because I wanted to know if it hit me here [points to chest], would I go flying backwards or keep going forward with my running momentum. Well, what I found out was, if you're running, it would slow you down just so much — and then you'd fall. Little details like that are important to me because I want my performance to be extremely honest.

**SC:** Kudos... But before FROM HERE TO ETERNITY, you starred with Sophia Loren and John Huston in ANGELA.

Railsback: It was based on Oedipus. Sophia's character and mine have a love affair, and it turns out to be a mother and her son. But to work with John Huston and Sophia... I never worked with

Huston as a director. And he was also such a great actor... Great people... That gruff voice of his... I read lines with him. At one point during the production we had this big chess game, and I remember the two of us talking back and forth as we played. And during the game he would sometimes yell, "Cut!" He was just so used to calling "Cut!" when he'd direct. But he didn't say it in a mean way. He was basically saying, "I don't know where I am. Let's go back. Cut." I called "Cut!" a couple of times, too. [laughs] What a fantastic man. And to have the pleasure of working with him...

**SC:** What about working with Sophia Loren?

Railsback: You can find a lot of beautiful women in this town. But true beauty? What makes certain women stand out on the screen is what they have inside. It's what's in here. [Points to heart] That's what true beauty is. People like Sophia Loren and Natalie Wood were the most incredible people whom I was fortunate enough to spend a lot of time being with, talking with, and being part of.

**SC:** Your next big movie, of course, was THE STUNT MAN.

Railsback: Richard Rush sent me the script. You gotta understand, this was his baby. And I didn't know it at the time, but he'd tried to direct that movie for 10 years. The studios wanted to know, "What is it? A comedy? A drama? An action movie about stunt men? What is it?" Richard told them, "It's about all of those things." He's one of the truly brilliant people in our business.

So, okay, Rush sends me the script. And you can imagine what THE STUNT MAN read like as a screenplay. I read about 35, 40 pages, called Richard up and said, "We haven't met, and I'm not



William Devane and Steve Railsback in the TV mini-series FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

sure what I'm reading here. But I have a gut feeling that it's something special." "Well, come on over," he said. So I went up to his home in Bel Air. We talked for a few minutes before he read Nina's [Barbara Hershey's] part and I read Cameron; just playing around for about 10 minutes. Afterwards Richard looked at me, I'll never forget this, and said, "You're Cameron."

You know, Richard could have made that movie with me if he used Sean Connery [as Eli Cross]. And he could have done it made with Peter O'Toole if he used Jeff Bridges [as Cameron]. And he could have made it a whole "other" way with Marty Sheen and George C. Scott [as Cameron and Eli Cross, respectively]. But he refused to do it without Peter and me. I feel so fortunate to have been a part of it. Nobody ever

did that for me. Nobody ever said something like "You're Cameron" in such a short span of time.

It took Richard a year-and-a-half before we could start shooting, and it was the greatest four-and-a-half months I've ever worked on a movie. Peter, Barbara, myself, everyone in the cast, we could not wait to get to the set every day because we knew something creative and exciting was going to happen. The crew would have killed for Richard. I'll tell you something: You treat a crew with the respect that they deserve, they will kill for you.

**SC:** Did Rush let you do your own thing or was he specific about what he wanted?

Railsback: He'd let you find things. But Richard was one of those special directors who would let you fly — he wanted you to fly. But you always knew there was a net to catch you.

**SC:** So what was O'Toole like?

Railsback: Brilliant guy — and obviously you had to come up to his level. See, Peter comes from the gut and gives. Acting is about giving. It really is. And if somebody is giving to me and I'm giving to them, then you've got a moment.

I remember the first scene we shot was where Alex Rocco's character shows up on the beach. We shot that scene in La Jolla. But before we shot it, Peter and I were on these steps above the beach talking about *Time Magazine* or whatever — and he was trying to intimidate me. I saw it. He wanted to see if I'd fold. And I refused to do so because we had four-and-a-half months left to shoot, and I sure as hell wasn't going to let this man intimidate me. So I stood right there with him. And the next day, I found a bottle of wine in my trailer with a ribbon on it and a note attached which read, "For being unimimidable" — Peter O'Toole. We became very close after that.

**SC:** With a movie title like *THE STUNT MAN*, there must have been some dangerous moments for you in terms of the movie's actual stunts.

Railsback: I did 70 percent of the stunt scenes on the roof [of the Hotel del Coronado near San Diego, California]. But you have to understand, I had stunt men protecting me — you just didn't see them, but they were always around me. They're phenomenal people.

**SC:** You've also told a curious story about when O'Toole and you went up on a crane which sort of floated about the hotel — at very great heights.

Railsback: Oh yeah. We'd get the giggles. We'd start laughing. But look at some of the pictures taken of that scene. Look at Peter. He's holdin' on to me! He did that from the beginning. And I'm gonna, "I got nothing to hold on to!" We just had a seat belt. And as we passed the cameras while we were on this crane, we started giggling like little kids. [Laughs] Then, when it was over, Peter and I talked in his dressing room about how brave we were. And I remember an assistant knocked on the door and said, "Oh, Richard says he needs one more shot of you two goin' around the hotel on the crane." After talking about how brave we were, Peter was like [pauses, then nervously], "Uh... oooh-hay... Steve... Steve! C'mon! Let's go." [Laughs] I was nervous, too.

Every time we'd come down from some high flights of acting, Peter would go [in English

accent], "Wardrobe?" And sometime while they were setting up a shot, Peter and I would go off and talk about acting. I said to Peter, "Arthur Penn once said to me, 'Choice is art.' In other words, the choices we make exactly make up the art that we do. And Peter goes, "Yes! — and art is choice! And we talked about choices, and the choices he'd made in *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*. And I told him about the choices that I'd made in various

**SC:** There was a period in your career where you switched from edgier characters to playing a lot of hero types, like in *LIFEFORCE*.

Railsback: We shot that in England for six months.

**SC:** Was Tobe Hooper at any point replaced during the filming of *LIFEFORCE*?

Railsback: No. He did the whole thing. It cost \$35 million dollars back in 1984. They didn't have computers [for special effects] back in those days, but we had the best special effects man in the world: John Dykstra. We also had the guy [Dan O'Bannon] who wrote *ALIEN*. But, as I say, it took six months, and sometimes we'd only get one shot per day... all of those damn wires. Today *LIFEFORCE* is somewhat of a cult film. I had fun making it, and John Dykstra was great.

**SC:** Any especially difficult scenes to shoot?

Railsback: The effects were hard because... Like they had some of us hanging way up on these wires in these very hot space outfits towards the beginning of the movie. We shot on four soundstages — all at Elstree Studios — and one of them was the largest soundstage in the world at the time, where they did all of the Bond pictures.

**SC:** What was Tobe Hooper like to work with?

Railsback: I knew Tobe before because Marilyn Burns — who starred in *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* — played Linda Kasabian in *HELTER SKELTER*. So Tobe would hang out at the set, which is how I first met him.

Working with Tobe was great. A terrific director. Fantastic imagination. But he's like a child sometimes. You know, when the creature in the movie stands up on top of all of those bodies and bones? Well, between scenes, he was holding the model of the creature, and he was like [with look of fascination, while turning imaginary armature around in his hands], "Wowwww!" [laughs] It's just wonderful to watch him... He just loved it!

**SC:** So there's a charming, child-like quality about him.

Railsback: Absolutely. And there's also a charming adult in there.

**SC:** You starred in one of the better "new" *TWILIGHT ZONE* stories back in the mid-'80s: an episode entitled "Dead Run."

Railsback: I was a truck driver transporting souls to hell. [Laughs] I loved the *TWILIGHT ZONE* when I was younger. So when they offered that to me, there was no way I was going to say "no." I grew up with it!

**SC:** Let's talk about "Duane Barry," the superb *X FILES* episode where your character is plagued by memories of alien abduction.

Railsback: When my character is talking about people getting abducted... You know, he'd finally had it to here. That's what I liked about Duane Barry. He'd had it with everybody putting him in mental institutions and telling him he's crazy. But it's because he was telling the truth — in my opinion — which made it a positive. So I played it as if it was the fuckin' truth.

**SC:** How did you get involved with the series?

Railsback: It was offered to me while I was editing *THE FLIGHT OF THE DOVE* (1996), a picture that I directed starring Scott Glenn and Theresa



Railsback, Peter O'Toole and director Richard Rush on the set of *THE STUNT MAN*

movies. But what a thrill it was just to talk to Peter O'Toole about acting.

And Peter told me a story about making *THE LION IN WINTER* with Katherine Hepburn. She would basically come out of her trailer, and they'd run camera as soon as she was in frame. They'd call "Action!", she'd walk to her mark and start to talk. And as she spoke, her eyes would tear up and she'd break down. They shot it four times, and she did it perfectly every time. Well, Peter just had to know how she was getting there, what she was using. He just needed to know for himself.

So he stuck over to her trailer and looked in the window. And when the A.D. knocked on her door and said, "Miss Hepburn, we're ready for you," she said, "Just one minute." And in the privacy of her trailer, she put on a phonograph record and played a song: it was her and Spencer Tracy's favorite tune. She would play that and then walk out and do that scene. That's a choice Peter was just enthralled when he found out about it.

Peter also told me about other choices he'd made. Remember in *THE LION IN THE WINTER* when he's in the dark, dancing and swirling by himself, and he's got his sword out? Well, it was a simple choice: Peter pretended that the sword was a mirror. And as he was dancing, he was looking in the mirror. Choices can be simple.

It's the same thing as those two people I was talking to [in *HELTER SKELTER*]. Your choices don't have to be intense — but you still need to have them.

Russell: I read the "Duane Barry" script and thought it was incredible, but I couldn't do it because I was editing. So I turned it down.

Not long after, X FILES creator/producer Chris Carter called me in the editing room and said, "Steve, I just need to talk to you for a second." I'd never met him. I hadn't even seen an episode of THE X FILES. And Chris said, "Steve, if you turn this role down, I don't know what to do because I wrote it for you." My heart fell out. I was so flattered. After that conversation, he sent me an X FILE episode so that I could see what the show was like. And, my God, the script was so wonderfully written. Also, I believe it was the first time Chris was going to direct an episode. But when he said that he'd written "Duane Barry" for me, there's no way I'd let it go. So I closed down the editing room, went to Canada for three weeks, did those two shows ("Duane Barry" and "Ascension"), then came back and finished the editing.

**SC: We're all glad that you did, too! Now in the Hitchcockian suspense mystery SCISSORS (1991), you play twins.**

Railsback: One of whom was a soap opera actor, which I loved. [laughs] Sharon [Stone] is a class act. It was a pleasure working with her. We'd wanted to work together for a while. I have nothing but great things to say about her.

**SC: In 2000, you delivered one of your truly great roles, as the title character in ED GEIN.**

Railsback: They brought it to me as a slasher movie, and I said, "No, I'm not interested in doing it as a slasher movie. But... if you want to do a character study, I might be interested." I wasn't interested in seeing blood everywhere. I wanted to explore the colors... what makes people sick. And I had two-and-a-half months to prep for the role, which was a luxury.

**SC: The late Carrie Snodgress was also excellent as Gein's monstrously oppressive mother.**

Railsback: Carrie had been a friend of mine for many years before we did that, and I actually said, "We've got to have Carrie Snodgress play this." She was one of my really good friends. And, yes, she's great in it.

**SC: Was it your idea to have actual footage of Ed Gein being arrested by police and put in a squad car at the very beginning of the movie?**

Railsback: That was the writer's idea... We would all meet and give notes on each draft of the script. But I think that was the writer's idea: "Why don't we use real footage?" We do it at the end of the movie, too.

**SC: Which makes it a very complete film.**

Railsback: And then we have me talking in the insane asylum.

**SC: Since you were executive producer, I'd think that you had a lot of freedom to interpret the character the way you wanted to.**



Steve Railsback as ED GEIN

Railsback: Yeah, I had a lot of freedom. I also took a lot of notes because, see, I wanted it to be factual.

**SC: Tell us about some of your research.**

Railsback: At the time, there were five books written on Gein, and I read all five; some of them a couple of times. So did the screenwriter because, again, I wanted it to be as factual as possible. I also read DSM-III and DSM-IV [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders] which are books that psychiatrists in residency use, which you can get at, for example, UCLA. You're in those books. I'm in them. Everybody's in them. They give you everything: definitions, characteristics... I worked with DSM-III and DSM-IV in terms of studying schizophrenia. We finally started shooting the movie after the ninth draft of the script, which the writer, director, producer, and I kept meeting about, discussing and revising.

I loved Gein playing "Go Fish" with the kids in the movie. Gein loved kids. He really did. The cannibal aspect of the movie was a little vague because nobody knew if he actually was a cannibal or not. So when I'm flipping the pork chops in the frying pan, you can think whatever you want.

**SC: Gein was supposedly hoping to eventually get a sex change, so he'd sometimes wear women's skin and dance in a tribal fashion at night.**

Railsback: I said to the director, "He's going to dance in front of the moon, and we're gonna do this in one take. So make sure the film's in the camera and that nothing freezes" — we shot on 35mm — "because I'm gonna do it one time." So when they called "Action," I came out, danced, did everything I was supposed to do, and went back into the house.

**SC: Would you consider ED GEIN one of your best roles?**

Railsback: No. But I'm very proud of the way it turned out. I'm also proud of everybody else who worked on it.

**SC: Was Ed Gein a tough role to play in a positive way? — seeing as he was so complicated.**

Railsback: Yeah, I made it a positive because I felt in his mind he didn't think he was wrong. All I wanted to do was fill him out, not to justify what he did, but to make a human being out of him with an illness. Don't misunderstand me here: I wasn't condoning what he did. But at the same time, I just wanted to show all of the colors that made him who he was. And he had all kinds of sides. I mean, he was a child. He was a man. He was so dependent on his mother. So I wanted to find every color. What made this man? Schizophrenia, obviously.

Do you know that the insane asylum was the happiest place he'd ever been in? That's what a fact.

**SC: You're currently working on BARSTOW, right?**

Railsback: Right. BARSTOW is also about so many things. Three losers end up in Barstow, California, and one finds the light at the end of the tunnel. But it's so multi-layered. It's a character piece. My brother wrote the script a long time ago. We'll probably start filming in about three months. We'll go on location, but also do some interiors here in Los Angeles. We're going to shoot some of it in Victorville, which is on the way to Barstow, because it just has that look. Besides, in Victorville they've got this great motel that's a dump. A place where you don't want to stay in. And naturally we're also going to shoot in Barstow.

**SC: Are you going to be one of the three characters?**

Railsback: No, no. I'm just directing. I can't direct myself. I respect people who can. Scott Wilson is in it. He's starring in THE WALKING DEAD now. We'll also have Keith Carradine... I'm actually going to try to get Joaquin Phoenix, too.

**SC: It seems like movies from the '60s and '70s were more personal than most films today. They weren't overloaded with special effects and had a greater focus on character and dialogue.**

Railsback: Many of the movies today are overloaded with action. BARSTOW has some action at the end, but it's not like AK-47 stuff. It's about these characters. And two of 'em, Jackie and Mickey, couldn't tell the truth if hit 'em in the face. They can bullshit with the best of 'em. It's got humor... As I say, it's got everything.



Mathilda May and Railsback in LIFEFORCE

**SC: Your first directorial effort, however, was THE FLIGHT OF THE DOVE.**

Railsback: Right. That's about a C.I.A. agent [Scott Glenn] on the run from another C.I.A. agent [Theresa Russell]. Scott meets her in a bar and gets caught in the middle. And because she raises dove, we called it FLIGHT OF THE DOVE. Her code name is also Dove. I didn't write it, someone else did. But I helped with some of the writing. I'm not good with structure, but I'm pretty good with scenes.

**SC: Why did you get involved in THE FLIGHT OF THE DOVE?**

Railsback: I simply wanted to direct. And I knew the script was good enough that my friends would be there for me. And I did what Kazan did to me. Scott, whom I've known for years, came to my house, and we talked. [CONTINUED on PG. 46]

# CONFESIONS OF A FORMER SAINT: An Interview With Actor IAN OGILVY

By ANTHONY PETKOVICH

While Ian Ogilvy is living and (for the most part) working these days in Hollywood, I — like a lot of SHOCK CINEMA readers — recall first seeing him in such now classic BBC shows as *I, CLAUDIOUS* (1976) and *UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS* (1972), as well as British horror films like *AND NOW THE SCREAMING STARTS!* (1973), and, of course, a few years later as the updated Simon Templar in the short-lived ITC series *RETURN OF THE SAINT* (1978-79). Ogilvy was one of those many working British actors during the '60s and '70s named "Ian." You recall, there was Ian Bannen, Ian Hendry, Ian Carmichael, Ian Richardson, Ian Holm... Did I forget any Ian's? Probably a few. But Ogilvy certainly stood out as the youngest and (sorry, ladies) most desirous-looking of the lot, which — coupled with his on-screen charisma and talent — undoubtedly helped him nail the resurrected Templar role.

Born September 30, 1943, in Woking, Surrey, England, Ogilvy ultimately went to a brace of prestigious British schools: namely, Eton and The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), the latter institution supplying the major foundation of his actor's training. And after graduation, he was an extremely busy young man, appearing in, among numerous movie projects, international titles (*THE DAY THE FISH CAME OUT, WATERLOO*), as well as working frequently on British TV (including shows like *THE AVENGERS*). Just as adept at tackling comedy (*NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE BRITISH*) as handling drama-based material (*WUTHERING HEIGHTS, COP-OUT*), Ogilvy has always been a welcome star in any feature film or television program.

Yet to many film buffs, Ian also has sort of become known as the guy who played the young lead in legendary director Michael Reeves' three horror movies: *THE SHE BEAST* (1966), *THE SORCERERS* (1967) and *WITCHFINDER GENERAL* [a.k.a. *The Conqueror Worm*] (1968). Each successive movie was markedly better than its predecessor — culminating in the bloody (literally and figuratively) brilliance of *WITCHFINDER* — and thus displaying Reeves' incredible promise as an up-and-coming director. As most fans know, Ogilvy and Reeves met when they were teenagers and started making amateur movies together. Reeves' (unlucky and, according to Ogilvy, totally accidental) drug overdose death at the age of 26 in 1969, shortly after the release of *WITCHFINDER*, quickly made him a horror-movie legend. Consequently, Ian has become, in a way, Reeves' unofficial historian. Now, after many decades (and surely far too many questions about Reeves), Ogilvy still doesn't mind in the least talking about his friend and the relatively short time they spent making pictures together.

I recently spoke with Ogilvy on the rather crowded but, nonetheless, peaceful patio of an L.A. Coffee Bean on a warm Sunday morning. Actually — next to Mike Henry, Francine York, Nigel Davenport, and Ed Lauter — Ogilvy is one of the nicest actors to whom I've ever spoken. The guy is so easygoing and (dare I say?) decent.

Listen to his gentlemanly, modest, upbeat, frequently self-deprecating and, at times, hilarious commentary on *THE SHE BEAST*, and you'll understand exactly what I mean. While he's no longer performing in the theatre due to unfortunate circumstances, Ian is still active on the other side of the stage as a director. And while

**SC:** Did Reeves pick Karloff for *THE SORCERERS* — because he obviously didn't want Vincent Price for *WITCHFINDER GENERAL*?

Ogilvy: Yes, he wanted Karloff, who was 83 or 84 at the time.... A dear man. My stepdaughter at the time was five or six, and when Karloff was all covered in the black make-up — the burn make-up

— she'd sit on his knee, and he'd have a chat with her. I asked her afterwards, "What did you think of his face?" And she said, "He's just an old man with black stuff on his face." She had made no connection with the horror of it.

**SC:** Your *SORCERERS* co-star, Victor Henry, had a tragic ending to his rather short life, didn't he?

Ogilvy: Oh, terrible. He was a RADA contemporary of mine. Wild, crazy guy, I mean, we did a play once when we were drama students, and every night Victor would stand in the wings, completely naked, wagging his dick at you to try and make you laugh. He was a madman. But he was also one of the most exciting young actors in England at the time. Much more interesting than me. Why he did our *SORCERERS* movie, I don't know. But he was a character. He was also a great drunk, like a lot of wonderful English actors. In fact, a *huuuuuuuge* drunk.

But somewhere along the line, he's standing along the sidewalk in London, perfectly sober, and a truck or bus jumps the curb, hits him, puts him into a coma, and for the next 20 something years he's lying in a hospital bed, a vegetable, and never wakes up. Then one day — with his mother by his bedside — he dies. It's a tragic story. He was a sweetheart.

**SC:** Any humorous anecdotes regarding Victor Henry while making *THE SORCERERS*?

Ogilvy: Yes. There's a little scene which we shot outside a pub or club, late at night, where I say, "I'm going off on my own." Just Victor and me talking. And Mike said, "Listen, guys, while we're setting up the scene, go inside, keep warm." Bad idea. I had half a lager and thought, "That'll do." Victor starts really putting the beer away. But he's sitting there, chatting away, being funny and appears perfectly sober. "Okay, we're ready." Michael tells us. We walk outside — and the cold night air hits Victor like a sledgehammer. He's absolutely paralytic drunk; can't do the scene at all. And he's standing there swaying, trying to put his cold hands into his pockets, but he's so drunk that he can't find his pockets, and it looks like he's masturbating. [Laughs] Mike thinks it's both the funniest thing he's ever seen but also the most appalling, because he can't use any of it.

So the next day, Victor Henry and his agent are summoned to watch the dailies. I'm sitting next to Mike, while Victor is seated next to his agent in front of us. And as we watch this scene, Victor is slumping lower and lower in his chair. The agent is not moving. Mike and I are actually laughing, but we're trying to stop ourselves. Anyway, Victor and the agent eventually turn around and say, "Well



he continues to act in the odd movie, he also finds great pleasure writing children's books, with no small measure of success. His "Measles" books are particularly good, all founded in magic, sorcery, comedy, and scatology; the darkly comedic style wonderfully reminiscent of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Fun stuff — even for adults: although the Measles books are basically written for young folks, 12 and up. But, hey, if you're reading SHOCK CINEMA, you're a bit of a kid at heart anyhow, right?

**SHOCK CINEMA:** Let's just jump right into *THE SORCERERS*, a favorite Ogilvy/Reeves movie. Your role as a rebellious London youth, scientifically possessed by an older couple [Boris Karloff and Catherine Lee] was much more challenging and provocative than your relatively more simplistic one in Reeves' cinematic calling card, *THE SHE BEAST*.

Ian Ogilvy: Yes it was, I suppose. But remember, I was a much more experienced actor by then, because in-between those movies for Mike Reeves, I'd do seven TV jobs and another movie or two. So, while the three movies Mike did were progressive for him, they weren't for me. But in-between them, I was working like a crazy guy.

pay for the re-shoot ourselves. No matter what it costs, we will pay for the re-shoot! So that scene you see in the movie is the re-shoot. [laughs]

**SC:** How long have you lived in LA?

Ogilvy: 23 years. I'm an American citizen now.



### With Boris Karloff in THE SORCERERS

**SC:** Congratulations.

Ogilvy: [Shakes hands] Thank you. It's one of those things where, if you live here and you're married to an American, I just think it's common manners to say, "Listen, this is the country which I've adopted, so why not go the whole hog with it?" The other nice thing about it is that, unlike in the old days, you're allowed to have dual citizenship.

**SC:** Do you travel back to England much?

Ogilvy: Every year. I used to do it more frequently before I had a little breakdown.

**SC:** Breakdown?

Ogilvy: I began to develop a very odd and debilitating form of stage fright, which happens quite often to older men and women. It didn't feel like fear. I would feel dizzy and sick all day long. And it culminated in a thing where you actually have a total brain freeze.

When it hit me, I was sitting in a theatre dressing room and couldn't remember the first line of the play. So I'm thinking, 'Shit, what's going on?' I didn't have a script in my room, so I went over to the stage manager's corner where there's always one, opened it — and a completely strange play looked back at me. I didn't recognize the names or the characters... It was like somebody had played a terrible joke on me. This was about seven or eight years ago, and I've never been back on the stage. It was all purely psychoomatic, but it was ruining the theatre experience for me. I'd love to try to go on stage again, but it would always have to be in some small cameo role. I don't think I'd ever want to carry a play like I used to in the old days.

**SC:** I have in my notes that you grew up in Woking, Surrey.

Ogilvy: Born there — didn't grow up there — In 1943, I was a real war baby. Originally we were out in the country, away from the bombs. Then after the war, we moved to London. But when I was seven, we moved back to the country. And then when I was around 14, we returned to London.

**SC:** Let's talk about your parents.

Ogilvy: In 1929, my mother, 17-years-old at the time, went on a Far East tour, completely unchaperoned, to Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, and

Rangoon, in a company called The Quaints. They took nine plays on the road. And on that tour was a young Johnny Mills, and they fell in love. They eventually came back to London, got married, stayed married for nine years and didn't have any children. Then he met Mary Hayley Bell, who was the great love of his life, and my mother and he got divorced. So my mother had been an actress.

My father had briefly been an actor, as well, until he discovered that he hated actors and poverty, almost equally, and got into advertising — he and his brother David. My father operated in England, while my uncle David operated on Madison Avenue. And if you talk to advertising people and mention the name David Ogilvy, it's like you're saying "Buddha." He was the most famous advertising executive of his generation, mainly known for great print ads, for which he would write iconic copy.

**SC:** Was your family well off?

Ogilvy: Yes. I mean, I have to admit it. As my father was the CEO of a London advertising company, yeah, we were fine. My sister and I were sent to good schools, had wonderful holidays abroad... So we had quite a privileged childhood.

**SC:** And as a kid, you were?...

Ogilvy: Good and nice. [laughs] No, I was physically and mentally lazy and sent to boarding school at the age of six. It was a little traumatic, but it gave you a very good education. I first went to Sunningdale School then to Eton, which was like high school. And when I was at Eton in the 1950's, it was curse 19th Century. Totally antiquated. Corporal punishment, for instance, was rife there: older boys beating, legitimately according to the school, younger boys with canes. All of the younger boys were unpaid servants to the older ones. You had to make their bed, clean their room, make them tea... Yet all of that wasn't so bad, considering that a lot of the kids who went to Eton were unbelievably privileged and perhaps held hordes of servants who were probably treated quite badly, so they learnt what it was like to be a servant.

But I hated my Eton time because I was fighting a system that... I mean, acting was considered immoral, against the law of God when I was there. It wasn't considered the business of a young gentleman. You were being trained for the law, the army, the church, or politics. Many English prime ministers went to Eton. But acting? No way. [laughs]

**SC:** "Tomkinson's Schooldays," the pilot for RIPPING YARNS (1976) — where you play a foppish bully — seemed like a parody of Eton.

Ogilvy: That was fabulous. Oh yeah, it was based on Eton. Terry Jones and Michael Palin from Monty Python were asked by the BBC to come up with a half hour of... something. And they came up with that show, which was a pastiche on Tom Brown's Schooldays, a famous Edwardian English novel about heroic boys at boarding school. And just some of the dialogue in that particular show... or the image of little new boys being nailed to the wall... We laughed like mad while making it.

**SC:** And after Eton, you went to RADA for? — Ogilvy: Two years — and it was the most fun you've ever had. As RADA was a proper drama school, everything was covered: movement, voice, production, fencing, stage make-up, hundreds of different things. You were also rehearsing and putting on plays all of the time. RADA had two theatres, and the general public was welcome to come and buy a ticket if they wanted to. While I was there, I actually got an agent, which was good. She came to see a show and said, "Yeah, I'll sign you up when you graduate." So I had an agent ready and waiting to start working with me.

**SC:** Tell us about working with Barbara Steele and producer Paul Maslansky on THE SHE BEAST, the movie which reunited you with your teenage pal Michael Reeves.

Ogilvy: I've met Barbara several times since then and she always insists, "Honestly, Ian, I know I did it, because I'm an imbecile, but I have no memory of making it." Well, the reason was, she was on that movie for 24 hours and went straight to another one. She made about nine to 10 movies a year in those days, and they were little, cheapo pictures. It was my first movie, and I was so happy to be in it. Still, to me, it's a dreadful, fucking awful-looking film. It really is.

Maslansky was lovely. And I just liked the fact that he was so excited about young people wanting to make movies. He was pretty young himself.

**SC:** Let's talk a little about THE DAY THE FISH CAME OUT (1967).

Ogilvy: Oh, that's another stinker. What happened was Michael Cacoyannis — who had just made ZORBA THE GREEK — produced [and wrote and directed] this... piece of unbelievable crap. It was



Candice Bergen and Ian Ogilvy in  
THE DAY THE FISH CAME OUT

known as a gay movie because [laughs] we all had to wear these laughable costumes. And there was a 19-year-old Candice Bergen and I. She was sweet but still kind of a bimbó, saxy, really.

Years later, I'm in America doing a MURPHY BROWN, and Candice looks at me from across the set. My head goes down and I think, 'No, she'll never remember me.' She walks over and says, "Hi, Ian. Jesus Christ, how long has it been?" So we're talking, and I said, "I know, I've got a scrapbook full of photographs of us in our ridiculous clothes." Her face went white. "For God's sakes," she said, "do not bring them here." And I said, "Why not? Wouldn't you like to see them?"

She said, "If any one member of this crew took a look at what we looked like, I would be flogged unmercifully and it would never stop." [laughs]

**SC:** I also recently saw another one of your early movies, *COP-OUT* (1967), and thought, for what it's worth from me, that you were quite good as the roguish, poor little rich boy.



Ian Ogilvy and Bobby Darin in *COP-OUT*

Ogilvy: Thank you. James Mason liked me and actually got involved in my wardrobe. "I don't like Ian's coat," he said. "Let's go find him another one." So the three of us — the director, Mason and I — tramped off to a men's outfitters, and I modeled coats while Mason sat in a chair and said, "I like that one... don't like that one..."

Bobby Darin was in it. Bobby seemed nice but was slightly out of place and puzzled about what he was doing there. He was playing an American shit-stirrer with a silly catch phrase which was [in effect] tone! "Am I that so?" The whole thing was so self-consciously trendy. I think it's impossible to watch James Mason's the only good thing in it.

**SC:** In terms of *WITCHFINDER GENERAL*'s ending, you state in the DVD commentary that you didn't like the delivery of your final lines.

Ogilvy: No. It sounds a bit performed, doesn't sound organic. But I've always been very critical of myself. I think I was getting slowly better.

**SC:** Was there really this almost apocryphal animosity between Reeves and Price on the set of *WITCHFINDER* — seeing that Reeves wanted Donald Pleasance, not Price, to play the main character of Matthew Hopkins?

Ogilvy: It's one of those areas where I become slightly useless because, if you actually analyze the amount of time which I spend with Vincent in the film, it's very little — other, that is, than on scene at the beginning of the movie and one at the end. I mean, Mike and I spent time together. We'd drive up to London on weekends and sit and talk about the movie, so I knew it was there; his displeasure with Vincent.

And while Vincent was just as unhappy with Mike, he wasn't unhappy all of the time. Vincent in the evenings — when he'd had a couple of drinks — would sit and wear a lot of turquoise and silver jewelry and tell us wonderful, funny stories about Hollywood. He was very entertaining and enjoyed the company of all of us. He also loved antiques. I mean, as he was in the heart of East Anglia,

he'd go off antique-hunting all of the time.

But the famous night was in Norfolk Castle, where I had to take an ax to Vincent — and he was drunk. No question about it. He wasn't paralyzed like Victor Henry, but he'd had a few, and he was looking forward to going home.

**SC:** And Mike Reeves instructed you to really lay into Price with the ax?

Ogilvy: And I said, "Mike, don't be bloody..." This ax was heavy. It was made of rubber, but it was solid, weighed a lot and would easily bruise you. Actually, Philip Wadlowe, one of the producers, started padding up Vincent like crazy because he'd heard overheard Mike saying it. And Vincent didn't want to wear the padding. "Get the stuff away from me!" All of this was going on. So I did hit him, but not as hard as Mike wanted me to. Anyway, it was ridiculous because, as you know, the censor cut away nearly all of the ax scene. Some of it has been put back, since there are a few versions of the film.

**SC:** When did you first learn that Mike Reeves had died?

Ogilvy: My then-wife and I lived in a little house in Putney. My son had just been born, and we had a nice au pair girl. While we were out, somebody had phoned, and when we came back home, the au pair girl said, "Oh, I have to tell you, Mike Reeves has died." So it was a terrible shock because, at the time, he was my closest friend. But I didn't go into a period of depression. I kept working. I've always rather felt that way: namely, even if it takes you unwillingly, it does actually happen to everybody, sooner or later. His was just sooner.

**SC:** Why was your hair blonde in *THE AVENGERS* episode "They Keep Killing Steed"?

Ogilvy: I was playing a German baron, and they said, "How would you feel about dying your hair blonde?" I said, "Okay, whatever." So I went off and had it bleached. And the moment I finished the thing, I had it dyed back again. [laughs] I didn't like it at all. I thought it looked ridiculous.

**SC:** What about being directed in that episode by Robert Fuest, with whom you'd worked shortly thereafter on *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* (1970)?

Ogilvy: I remember both times working with him being pleasant. When I saw [THE AVENGERS episode], I thought, "My God! The man's great talent lies in how he sees the world — design-wise."

Actually, on that episode, I remember Linda Thorson suddenly having a little fit. I heard her saying to Patrick Macnee, "I hate it when they bring younger, prettier girls than me to play the guest stars. It's awful!" And Pat Macnee said, "Sweetheart, if I'd been upset in all the years I've been playing this role every time they brought in a younger, more attractive man than me — and God knows that's most of them — I'd never have carried on as an actor. Just remember one thing, Linda: It's Patrick Macnee and Linda Thorson in *THE AVENGERS*! That's all you really have to worry about!" That's a great bit of advice, isn't it?

**SC:** Excellent. Do think that Fuest directing you in *THE AVENGERS* had some bearing on him putting you in *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*?

Ogilvy: Probably. I wasn't terribly hot, but I was warm. [laughs] I was warmish. I didn't want to do it at first because, well, the part of Edgar Linton is... God what a wuss, what a wimpy, dreary... David Niven hated it when he played that part alongside Laurence Olivier. My American wife, however, has always very sweetly said that, when she saw the film as a very young girl, she far more fancied Edgar Linton than she did Heathcliff. [laughs] That's very sweet of her.

We filmed it up in Yorkshire on the real moors. It was bitterly cold all the time, and poor little Anna Calder-Marshall was always freezing to death. I was with Hillary [Dwyer] and all of them again. And I got to ride a horse around. It was a perfectly happy experience, but I wasn't impressed by my role. I did it to the best of my ability.

**SC:** I have a photo of you holding a home movie camera on location, while you're dressed in Edgar Linton's costume.

Ogilvy: Oh yeah. I was quite keen then on taking little amateur movies of stuff that I did. That would be the Beaufort. I bought it used for 100 pounds... 150 bucks. And I also took it with me to Russia when I was doing *WATERLOO* (1970)...

**SC:** ...which was quite an epic.

Ogilvy: Yeah, it was a big one. Another turkey though. I mean, how often do you see *WATERLOO* on TV?

**SC:** I quite liked your portrayal of Colonel Sir William Howe DeLancey. You really felt badly for him when he gets shot in the back. But we never actually see him die in the movie.

Ogilvy: In fact, historically, he survived for a whole week. His wife found him on the battlefield and



With Linda Thorson in *THE AVENGERS*

nursed him for a week in a farmhouse until he died. That's the true story.

Actually, I was cast in the movie because of *WITCHFINDER GENERAL*. I thought, "My God, this great director [Sergei Bondarchuk] has actually seen this Mike Reeves' movie and really liked it." Bondarchuk's direction was all done through interpreters. He didn't speak a word of English. "We re-hearsed" was the extent of his knowledge, which translated to "We rehearsed". So, yeah, we'd rehearse, but he had no idea what we were saying. But he obviously did a wonderful job, in so far as he could.

It was shot in the Ukraine, which was hot, dry and dusty. And while making the movie, there was

an awful lot of free time. But we were in Russia at the height of Brezhnev's Communist reign. Walking out of the town, you'd be met by a man with a submachine gun. But to go on the battlefield was stunning, simply because there were 20,000 extras, which was the Red Army.

**SC: UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS has become a classic BBC series.**

Ogilvy: It became an iconic series, yeah. But, of course, we didn't know such would be the case when we were shooting it. I was watching that show again the other day — hadn't seen it in many years — and thought [about my role], 'What an irritating character you are. You're so fucking full of yourself. And you're always coming out with these little quips.' He was written as asexual, but everybody said to me, 'Oh, you played the gay poet.' People are inclined to look at it like, 'If you're not interested in a wife, then you gotta be gay.' I've stopped fighting it.

**SC: What was the mood like on that set?**

Ogilvy: Lovely. Nic Pagey was an old mate of mine, and we were really good buddies. Almost too good buddies. [laughs] Beautiful girl, Gordon Jackson the butler was charming. I got to know David Langton very well — he's a sweet man who played the father. One of my best friends, Simon Williams, played the brother. Yeah, it was a very nice set. Charlie Gray... I don't really remember Charlie very well. When Jack Hawkins had his laryngectomy, Charlie was one of the two who'd revoiced him; the other was Robert Rietti.

**SC: Like UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS, I, CLAUDIOUS has become a BBC classic.**

Ogilvy: Heribert Wise, who directed some episodes of UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS, was one of those lovely directors who had a kind of repertory of actors. I worked with him many times on television, and when I heard he was doing I, CLAUDIOUS, I called him up and asked, 'Herbie, can I be in I, CLAUDIOUS?' And he said, 'Yes.' And I said, 'Can I play Caligula?' And he said, 'No, [laughs] You can play Drusus, who is Claudio's father.' He'd already cast me in the part in his head, anyway. And to this day, Derek Jacobi calls me dad. 'Hi, dad!' he says. Jacobi was brilliant from the get-go. It had a wonderful cast. I played the only sane person in the entire series. [laughs] Pretty much.

I didn't have a huge amount of screen time because by episode two or three, I'm dead. I die when my son Claudio is born. A very sympathetic character. My American wife saw it when I first met her and said, 'Oh, my God! It's a soap opera with togas!' [laughs]

**SC: Let's talk about NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE BRITISH (1973), which, alongside Ronnie Corbett and Susan Penhaligon, showcases your talent at comedy.**

Ogilvy: Ronnie Corbett was a darling. Susie Penhaligon, who also did a SAINT with me, was very cute. She still looks wonderful. And there was Beryl Reid of the old school. The movie was a lot of fun. It was actually a long-running, very successful English play. And the director, Cliff Owen, very wisely had us rehearse it for a month like a play. Consequently, all of that business [snaps fingers several times] was there before we started shooting. That's why I think it has a beautiful pace. The title destroyed it though. Most movie-going audiences thought it was a sex



Promotional photo for RETURN OF THE SAINT

comedy whereas, in fact, it really isn't — it's a little English farce.

**SC: Any funny anecdotes to relate about the filming of your episode, "The Door," in FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE (1974)?**

Ogilvy: I do remember actually being hurt in that, I was lying on my back being strangled by the ghost, as ghosts do... And the room is falling apart around us, right? And there's a guy up a ladder, cut off from, with a big plastic bowl full of talcum powder. I'm not told what he was going to do with this, but as I'm fighting the ghost, he empties the bowl of talcum powder, and it falls upon my face, with my eyes wide open. Instantly, of course, your eyes dry out, because it absorbs all of the moisture, and it was one of the most painful things [laughs] I ever went through. And I went ballistic. I very rarely ever lost my temper. But I did that day, because I was in such pain. How could you fucking do something as stupid as that? So they poured water in my eyes. And it was alright. I wasn't permanently injured, but it was just awful.

**SC: For RETURN OF THE SAINT, I read that you developed a sort of Kung-fu style of fighting because you weren't as big as TV's first SAINT, Roger Moore.**

Ogilvy: I had this stunt double with whom, yes, I developed this very loose, Kung-fu kind of fighting style. It was just made up. The problem was that we had an American producer on the show called Tony Spinner, brought in to help us sell the series in America. And at the time, the US ethos in television was 'no violence.' On one or two episodes before Spinner came onboard, we had guns. But after he arrived, 'No guns. Fights minimal!' And I was thinking to myself, 'This is ridiculous. I'm not a huge guy. And if a big heavy guy comes at me, and I go [does karate chop], what, he just falls over?' [laughs, shrugs shoulders]

One of my favorite scenes is in an episode we shot in Venice, where I come into a courtyard where there are six men with submachine guns, and I've got an automatic pistol in my hand. And I go, 'Drop your guns!' And they all do. [cracks up] And I ask the producers, 'Can we maybe shoot a few of these guys?' And they go [in stern, chiding voice], 'No, no, no. MUSTN'T do that.'

**SC: Was it a pain to shoot RETURN OF THE SAINT on so many locations?**

Ogilvy: Well, it was what cost us the money. Roger [Moore] hardly ever stepped outside of the studio when he did THE SAINT. And if they did shoot outside of the studio, it was usually second unit somewhere. I liked the fact that [our series] was going to look glossy; that when we were in a car, we were actually in a car and really driving it.

**SC: Did you feel that the role — in the wake of Moore's portrayal of Simon Templar — was a bit daunting? Big shoes to fill, so to speak?**

Ogilvy: So to speak. But it wasn't as if Roger had finished and I stepped in. It had been about 10 years. There was a long gap. But I thought [RETURN OF THE SAINT] was instantly dated. I kept the English reviews when that show came out, and they are some of the worst reviews I have ever read. I mean, staggering. But it didn't affect the popularity of the show. It still remained very popular.

**SC: But the series only ran for a year. Why do you think it didn't catch on?**

Ogilvy: It did catch on. It was very popular, selling in 73 countries around the world. But my boss, Lord Grade, whom I never met, as far as he was concerned it was very, very expensive. His accountant said to him, 'Yes but, Lord Grade,



On the set of WUTHERING HEIGHTS

we're making money on it, and next season, we don't have to go on location to France and Italy. We can shoot the whole thing in England.' He didn't like the show, anyway, so he arbitrarily cancelled us, took his profits from THE SAINT and applied them to making very expensive movies. And he lost it all — and lost his company to another Louis B. Mayer.

But RETURN OF THE SAINT was a very popular show. People enjoyed it. So it was a pity for me, really. I had all sorts of interesting promises from executive producer [CONT. ON PAGE 48]

# "ME AND MRS. JONES. WE'VE GOT A THING GOING ON": An interview with O-LAN JONES

By GREG GOODSELL

Quirky character actress O-Lan Jones has been quoted by various sources as saying, "Most actresses make money waitressing while trying to find acting work. I'm the only one who makes her career waitressing on screen." Jones laughs that quotation off with good-natured aplomb. "That's one of those things where they kind of twisted it, and it sounds bitchier than what I actually am! I'll just say that I've done all my waitressing on-screen!" she laughs.

Whatever the case, the multi-talented performer has appeared in many major motion pictures and left an indelible mark with film fans. Having worked with directors such as Peter Weir, Tim Burton and Oliver Stone, Jones is usually cast as no-nonsense, blue-collar mamas. In person, Jones is personable and very down to earth, bearing much good humor. At this stage of the game, she's delighted to be working in films again — her most recent effort was *QUEENS OF COUNTRY* (2011), and she's soon set to appear in *SYRUP* (2012), from directorial wunderkind Aram Rappaport. Jones now spends most of her time these days composing music and mounting elaborate musicals, operas and installation pieces.

Born in 1950, Jones was married for thirteen years to American playwright Sam Shepard, who she divorced in 1984. She is the mother of one son, Jesse Mojo Shepard. A colorful survivor, Jones is perhaps best remembered for her role as the organ-playing, fundamentalist Christian Esmeralda who joins in the neighborhood persecution of EDWARD SCISSORHANDS (1990). Jones has appeared in countless cult film favorites such as *MIRACLE MILE* (1986), *MARS ATTACKS* (1996), *NATURAL BORN KILLERS* (1994), and the LONESOME DOVE television mini-series (1989). Jones is rightly proud of the creative capacities she enjoyed as the star and co-author of Paul Bartel's *SHELF LIFE* (1993), arguably the greatest cult movie never released. This writer spoke to Jones on the eve of her latest theatrical project, "The Woman in the Wall." Our chat was amiable and punctuated with much raucous laughter...

**SHOCK CINEMA:** I see you had a son with American playwright Sam Shepard?

O-Lan Jones: I met Sam when I was an actress in New York. He was one of the playwrights around there at the time. There was a church there, and a company called Theater Genesis. It wasn't religious. I guess they still do it. They just have an empty space that people can use for what-ever, for the arts. I was part of an acting group, and Sam was just one of the writers, and that was where I met him. He wrote a play, which had a character named Olan in it, which was based on all the stuff he watched me doing. We were at this workshop out in the country, in Pennsylvania. That's how I got to know him, because he wanted me to be in this play, he had the character that he made up called Olan. He didn't actually make it up! He wrote it down! [laughs]

**SC: Do you have a real name?**

Jones: It's O-Lan! [laughs] My mother was a wild and free spirit, and she liked the name. She read it in a book called *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck. I made up Jones, the name I was born with was Barbra, and I knew how to spell it — O-Lan — by the time I was two years old. It's got a hyphen

you know an actor by the name of Charles Ludlam, the Theater of the Ridiculous? I was acting in a play, just for fun because I was going out with the writer or something, and Ludlam came into it. I started acting with him and all of a sudden I said, "Whoa! There's a lot more to this than I had imagined!" He created this whole extraordinary atmosphere, we were making up a world together on stage. So that's when I actually got interested in acting, because of him.

I was never in any Theater of the Ridiculous productions. I think when that was starting up, I left the country for awhile and lived in Europe and then moved to San Francisco. I wasn't in any actual productions.

**SC: Were you still doing theatre work up until 1978, the time of your first film role?**

Jones: I've never stopped! I'm always doing it. My first movie or TV role was in the TV-film *DEATH IN CANAAN* (1978).

**SC: There was *DIE LAUGHING* (1980), which was a New Wave teencom comedy.**

Jones: I played something like a judge in it. I just stood there, dressed up in a costume and stood there. I think the first real role in a film where I felt I was acting, was a TV-movie where I was playing the baddest girl in jail.

**SC: Any memories of *DIE LAUGHING*?**

Jones: The most interesting thing — I was sharing this tiny little trailer with somebody else. I was in the little bathroom stall, my roommate didn't know that I was there, and so she was giving herself a pep talk in the mirror! That was my most memorable part of that show! The actual acting was just 30 seconds of going out there, like a punk!

because it's two Chinese characters put together, "O" means profound, and the Lan means wild-flower. The name of the acting troupe I was in when I met Sam Shepard was Keystone Company. We would improvise shows, and there was another writer there, who would create dialogue from what we cooked up. There was just a bunch of people experimenting and doing whatever they wanted with the-ah-lah.

**SC: As a child, did you have artistic leanings?**

Jones: I always did. I had this very interesting mother and no formal education. I spent quality time in a hut in the jungle, in the Yucatan Peninsula, in Quintana Roo in Mexico. I'm writing a memoir. It was a very unusual background. I think you could call it extremely bohemian. My mother didn't play by anybody else's rules. Not even the bohemian rules, actually. She had her own light that she followed.

**SC: How did you first become involved with theatrical work?**

Jones: I guess when I was 16. I mostly wanted to be a singer-songwriter, but people kept asking me to be in their shows, and so I started doing that. The way that I got interested in the acting part —

**SC: In the more obscure film, *OUT* (1982), you play two characters, Nixie and Dinah. Do you remember that show?**

Jones: That's the one with Peter Coyote and Danny Glover in it. It was this bizarre thing like FORREST GUMP, where you follow all these people through these counter-cultures. I guess it's supposed to be the seventies or eighties — a big paranoid vision of America, where these people are all sort of the same characters in different settings. It was a weird movie, but it was fun acting with those guys.

**SC: You had a small role in *SHOOT THE MOON* (1982), director Alan Parker's devastating look at one couple's divorce.**

Jones: I remember that show, and I had a pivotal role — without me, the people do not receive their hot chocolate...

**CONVICTED: A MOTHER'S STORY** (1987) is the one where I'm the baddest woman in jail. I had to do fighting and rolling around.

**SC: In 1983, you were in a major motion picture, *THE RIGHT STUFF*.**

Jones: I remember that the extra that I was dancing with, in one of the scenes, got over-excited by



the whole experience of being in a movie and I earned it [laughs].

**SC:** Child actors are rather notorious for throwing up on movie sets!

Jones: I have a fear of throwing up... One of my favorite child actors — I was in *ANGEL HEART* (1987), but my scenes got cut out — and during the filming of that, we were all in this tiny little halfway in New York. There was this little child actor, who was like four or five, who was just talking non-stop in the make-up chair — wherever we were. And there was a moment of silence when they were loading the film canister or something, and there were about 20 people in that hallway; she was sitting there. She couldn't keep quiet one second longer, and all of a sudden she blurts out, "I get asked to callbacks all the time!" There was no stage mother there; she was pushing the whole show! [laughs]

**SC:** You were then in Jonathan Demme's cult favorite, *MARRIED TO THE MOB* (1988).

Jones: Yeah! That was big fun! You know what, that was the first time where I recognized that every other movie set I'd been on had been completely segregated; only white people. On *MARRIED TO THE MOB*, it was clear that the director made sure that all ethnicities and creeds and colors and everything were part of the workforce. I hadn't realized before how segregated films had been. Jonathan Demme was fantastic. He made a great atmosphere. It was just fun, playing that type of woman, wearing false fingernails and hairdos. I played a gangster wife.

**SC:** Here is one of my favorites, *MIRACLE MILE*, the nuclear war romance.

Jones: That was incredible! That is a fantastic movie! It's got such a tone to it. The funny thing about that one was it was all night shootings, and that puts you into an altered state anyway. It was just very well written and directed and had this whole feel to it. It was like a real world being created by the director, Steve De Jarnatt.

**SC:** He only did two films, which was kind of disappointing.

Jones: It was so disappointing! He should have done a lot. He was fantastic. He's writing short stories now.

**SC:** You play one of your patented waitress roles in that one, in the all-night cafe that finds out nuclear war is going to break out in a couple of hours. You go hurtling off in a van to restart civilization.

Jones: Yeah, I'm part of the gone pool for the next generation. You know we just made it to Antarctica. Sure! That movie was just terrifying watching it; the couple goes down into the far pits... I think there have been other movies that have been inspired by that film. It was so solid, from beginning to end; it deserved a much wider audience.

**SC:** You were in the *LONESOME DOVE* mini-series as short-tempered whore Sally Skull.

Jones: That was interesting. I got out there, and all these cowboy actor guys were out in the bush [laughs], for like a month, and I'm the first woman who shows up on the set. It was just like being in the zoo with these guys! They were out of their minds. It was a fantastic role, and the costumer had been holding onto these things for years and



O-Lan Jones in *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*

years. The corset really was from the 1800's.

**SC:** Here's another obscure film, *HOW I GOT INTO COLLEGE* (1989).

Jones: Oh, that was fun! That had Tony Edwards — I had worked with him on *MIRACLE MILE* — and Charles Rocket. Unfortunately, Rocket was the guy who was on *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE* and then they fired him, it was horrible. He died tragically. [Note: Rocket was found dead in a field near his Connecticut home on October 7, 2005, with his throat slashed. His death was ruled a suicide.]

It was generally fun acting with those two guys in it. There was a writer's strike when we were doing it. In movies, there is this really strict class system. If you're a day player, you're barely spoken to. I came on as a sort of humble day player. Then the director discovered I could improvise, so, in lieu of having a writer, because of the strike, he used me in a lot more scenes because I could just make stuff up on the spot. I saw this whole transformation where all these people who initially didn't have anything to say to me because I was a lowly day player, suddenly thought all my jokes were hilarious! And they took the time to curl and primp me. Because I'd been promoted. I thought, "this is the other side of the coin."

**SC:** Here's a movie you'll probably want to forget: the notoriously unfunny comedy *MARTIANS GO HOME* (1989).

Jones: *MARTIANS GO HOME* was one of the freest films ever made! I'm kidding. I don't think I ever saw the whole movie. The band that's playing, the Martian band that plays a medley of the weirdest, stupidest songs... That was because at the time, I was singing with — and I'm still singing with — this band called The STUPEDS [The Society To Undertake the Preservation of Endangered Dumb Songs]. We do covers of the dumbest songs ever written. The director or writer knew the head guy with The STUPEDS; he wanted us to be in it as the Martian band. It was really fun for that reason because the band already had a whole chemistry. We got up all done up in green makeup and into even stupider cutlits than we usually wear. The actual masking of the film was big fun. We did songs like "You Light Up My Life," there was a '70s medley like, "Billy Don't Be a Hero" ... lots of them! "Ebony and Ivory."

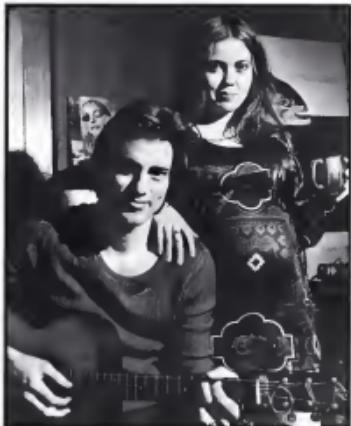
**SC:** *PACIFIC HEIGHTS* (1990), the thriller with Michael Keaton?

Jones: Yes! We had a huge empty building, it was this hotel that they had just built and nobody was using it yet, it was 30 stories high, hundreds of empty rooms. It was kind of a spooky thing hanging out in that hotel. Waiting in a room when there was no one else around...

**SC:** Here is the film that I will always associate you with. The vindictive, evangelical Christian neighbor Esmeralda, who makes *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS'* life a living hell!

Jones: I got into the B.M.I. for that! I am not a keyboard player, and they wanted me to play a hymn, and the organ was just part of the set. There was this fantastic organ, and Tim Burton asked me if I could play it, and I said, "Yeah, to a certain extent."

And he asked me, "Can you play a hymn on it?" They gave me this sheet music which was too hard for me to learn and act simultaneously, so I composed something simpler that I could play. So I got into the B.M.I. because they used 15 seconds of my music, and I still get residual checks for that! That was a fantastic role, and I really liked working with Tim and everybody else on that too. Johnny Depp was excellent. It was big fun to work with him and very available, and easy. I think they went to



Playright Sam Shepard and O-Lan Jones

the trouble of making all the windows in the housing development smaller than they actually were. It was a very, very specific vision that he had.

**SC:** Do you think *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS* is an analogy for the role of the artist in society? Jones: I've heard people talk about it like that. I think it's really about how everybody just kind of blunders into everything, you know? There's a lot of hoping for the best, and cluelessness and hurting people. It's always a shock when people are nasty or just thoughtless. There's a lot of that going into it, too. A person who doesn't know his own equipment, you know?

**SC:** You worked with Tim Burton again on MARS ATTACKS.

Jones: Now, that I think is one of the funniest movies in the world and should have done better.

**SC: SHELF LIFE...** is that the favorite of all your films?

Jones: It was the one that I had the most to do with. It was great fun! There were the three of us, MTV's "Randy of the Redwoods," whose real name is Jim Turner, and Andrea Stein and me. We put together this theater event. Paul came and saw it on the last night and he helped us make it into a screening and then he shot it.

I loved doing SHELF LIFE.

It was wonderful. It played in a local theater in LA that could seat 50 people in the audience. Paul just liked the idea that it's sort of a metaphor for the human condition. These three kids have been taken down into the bomb shelter when they were five, and the parents die shortly afterwards. The kids spend the rest of their time making up life the way they think it works, based on the amount of information they had when they were five years old and the little bit of information that keeps coming sporadically through the TV set. They kind of patch a life together.

It's not a documentary... they would eventually have run out of food! It's not supposed to be



O-Lan Jones menaced by Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis in NATURAL BORN KILLERS

**SC: Was it ever distributed?**

Jones: Not that's one thing I still want to do. It holds up, it's a weird little movie, but it still holds up. I heard somebody was not paying off the music rights or something. Some day I'm going to get a fundraising event to appeal to all the Paul Bartel fans, to pay off the damn music rights, and get it distributed.

**SC: Now, Oliver Stone's NATURAL BORN KILLERS...**

Jones: Oh my God! That was a difficult one. They had a sequence of different pieces of footage to represent switching to different channels on a TV. I don't know, eight or nine channels tuned to different programs. This is before DVD, so this was put together on a tape. It wasn't like each segment was 10 seconds long and I could count, each segment was a different length. There was no clue as to when to change the channel. I had to memorize the whole series of when things change. I didn't get it right the first couple of times. The guy who put the segments together would storm out, to show me how to do it, but he couldn't do it. It was my first shot of the whole shoot. I said, "OK. No one is ever going to understand how hard this is." Don't bother to tell anybody, just learn how to do it, now! That was one of the hard things, just trying to get the timing, whatever these visual cues were, it was all in the timing. It was very hard to do right on the spot.

The other thing was that with all the gunfire, everybody was wearing not gear and I had on a little mini-skirt and a T-shirt. The guy from THE CROW, Brandon Lee, had just been killed a week before. Somebody shot a blank and he was killed. I had all these people shooting at me. It was just flipping me out! The concentration of sound was just extreme. Everybody was taking a break as I was getting out of one bloody costume and getting into the unbloody costume. Finally, it was just like I was shaking like a leaf from all the shooting. I went end found Oliver Stone back in the kitchen area, where he was watching things on a monitor. I was trying to be a very responsible actress, so the first thing I said was "I think I can subject myself to this three more times. What kind of coverage do you want to get?" he said, "OK, fine."



O-Lan Jones in Paul Bartel's SHELF LIFE

stark realism. The style is a kind of realistic style, but it's about people making up life from fragments of information. It's basically about how people take the information, like we all have, and no matter how much time you spend on the Internet, we only have a tiny bit of information to figure out this whole site that we're living.

It was actually the last picture [Paul Bartel] ever directed.

**SC: He was very prolific. I was glad to see he got a lot of films made before he died on untimely death from cancer.**

Jones: SHELF LIFE is still a cult classic waiting to happen. The people producing it, in my opinion, my humble opinion, did not handle it right. It got a lot of good interest, but it never got picked up and distributed, and taken care of that way.

When I walked away, I thought "Now, why did I say three...?" He used all three shots, of course. Afterwards I felt like I was just convalescing from an illness or something, the adrenaline factor was really, really high. It took a week to shoot that opening scene. At first it was fun and fizzy. We were all lolling around on the set. And then they brought out the cut-off fingers and the brain splatter. The guys on the set started punching each other hard on the shoulder. The atmosphere got all gooey, with that kind of violence. I liked working with Oliver Stone. He was very fun and kind of playful to do things with.

I haven't seen the film for a

long time. I think that film was the first time that people worked with a lot of different kinds of film stock. I really thought that was interesting when I first saw that. I don't think anyone had done that before, really. I watched it with my hand over my eyes. I'm not into that kind of genre, but I thought it was good, with a basic spine to it. It didn't have a perfectly linear approach but the story held all the way through.

**SC: THE TRUMAN SHOW (1998), in which you played a waitress hooked on the title TV program, was an interesting film.**

Jones: Director Peter Weir was kind of fantastic. He was brilliant in the way he created such a great atmosphere. Often people aren't very respectful of the extras, but he spoke to them so carefully, and he expected some acting from them. He would say, "Film workers!" and they would all go "Huh? Yes, what?" In between the times when they were changing the film, he would keep the music that had been composed for the movie playing so he maintained the atmosphere of what the movie was during those breaks. That was an approach that I hadn't seen before.

I didn't act in movies for a long period, like seven years, because I've been composing a lot. Composing for singers, for small orchestra and like that. Just last year, a couple of people found me, while I was hiding away writing music, for QUEENS OF COUNTRY, my latest film. It was right when I was directing this huge opera extravaganza. We had this 25,000-square foot empty car dealership. There were installations, there were trains to carry people from installation to installation. There were like a hundred people involved. So when QUEENS OF COUNTRY came up, it was like going on a "paid vacation," out to Arizona to act in this movie and was fantastic! All I have to do is show up, and I don't have to carry ten heavy notebooks under my arm. The whole showbiz world is just pure fun!

I'm in this new film called SYRUP by director Aram Rappaport, he's only 23 or 24 and he's already made three movies. I think he made a movie that was all one long shot. He's a director that has his own vision — it's something you can feel as soon as you get on the set. It was so great to just be back in the business! It should be coming out fairly soon.

**SC: In recent years, in lieu of TV and film work, you've been mounting elaborate operas and performance pieces. Tell us about your latest project.**

Jones: It's called "The Woman in the Well." It's inspired by this very weird practice they had in the Middle Ages. [CONTINUED on PAGE 48]

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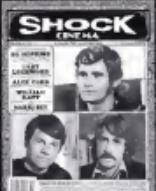
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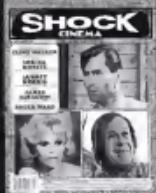


# SHOCK CINEMA BACK ISSUES

**SC 42, \$6.** Interviews with Bo Hopkins, Alex Cord, William Katt, Gary Lockwood, and Marki Bey. Reviews This is a Hijack, Linda, One of Those Things, Psychadelicase, Kickin' The Hash Tree, Mister Jenco, Gran Bolito, The Man Who Could Talk to Kids, The Wednesday Children, etc.



**SC 40, \$6.** Q&A's with Clint Walker, Aubrey Morris, Roger Ward, Louisa Moritz, James McEachin. Reviews: The Party's Over, High School Nerd, The Secret Life of Plants, Stars of the Roller State Disco, Off the Minnesota Strip, The Secret Night Caller, Young Americans, etc.



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**SC 39, \$6.** Q&A's with Luke Askew, Nigel Davenport, Marlene Clark, Michael Schultz, Paul Lewis. Reviews include The Hydrodrome, Gina, Old Faithful, Dossier 51, God Is On The Other Side.

**SC 38, \$6.** Interviews with Jim Kelly, Ed Lauter, Jack Potts, Gordon Hessler. Reviews include Satan Hates You, For Petes Sake!, The Corridor People, Silvano, Taxandria, Bathory, Bramwash.

**SC 37, \$6.** Q&A's with Dick Anthony Williams, Francine York, Jorge Rivero, James Hampton. Reviews: Get High on Yourself, Daddy's Boys, Rome 78, Mary's Incredible Dream, Supervisor.

**SC 36, \$6.** Interviews with Richard Lynch, Richard Rush, Linda Haynes, and Jennifer Ashley. Reviews: A Beast with Two Heads, Dad... Do I Know the Car?, Lepthica, A Small Town in Texas.

**SC 35, \$6.** Interviews with Richard sauna, Suzanne Love, Tony Musante, Chuck Ball. Reviews: Trackdown, Xango From Baker Street, The Last Run: The Book of Stone, Blue Blood, Stock.

**SC 34, \$6.** Interviews with Bo Svenson, Lee Ving, Barry Primus, Gus Trikonis, and Isela Vega. Reviews: Lizzle, The Slack, Mongo's Back in Town, The Long Island Four, The Night the Prowler.

**SC 33, \$6.** Interviews with Michael Ironside, Arthur Marks, Austin Pendleton, Belinda Balaski. Reviews: Where It's At, The Buttercup Chain, Jan Genet's Danthwatch, Sixteen, Les Creatures.

**SC 32, \$6.** Interviews with Tim Thomerson, Ronny Cox, Enrico Colantoni, Steve Carver, Bud Smith. Reviews: Cucumber Castle, The Red Light Bandit, Talk of the Town, World on a Wire.

**SC 31, \$6.** Q&A's with Ron Perlman, Robert Forster, Gary Sherman, Paul Maslansky. Reviews: Maidstone, Blackeyes, The Day of the Wolves, The Deadly Art of Survival, The Magic Toyshop.

**SC 30, \$6.** Q&A's with William Forsythe, Per Oscarsson, Gregg Henry, Matt Cimber, Anthony M. Lanza. Reviews: Murder à la Mod, A Girl in the Night, Between Time and Timbuktu, Dimah East.

**SC 29, \$6.** Q&A's with Powers Booth, John Flynn, Andrew Prine, Hal Barwood & Matthew Robbins, Greydon Clark. Reviews: Hell Drivers, T.P.M., Leo Pyne, Jim Henson's The Cube.

**SC 28, \$6.** Q&A's with Clini Howard, Shinya Tsukamoto, Richard & Donald Rubinstein, Sig Shore, Bob Minor. Reviews include Night Flowers, Ladybug Ladybug, Winter of the Witch.

**SC 27, \$6.** Q&A's with Bill Duke, Jon Finch, Sean S. Cunningham, Ken Russell, and Vic Diaz. Reviews include Plot on 42nd St., The Naked APA, Evening Primrose, Alternative 3, Boehm.

**SC 26, \$6.** Interviews with William Atherton, Eric Bogosian, William Sanderson, Joe Cortese, Eddie Romero. Reviews include Brute Corps, Puppet on a Chain, Change of Mind, Wild Seed.

**SC 25, \$6.** Interviews with Michael Potts, Ted Raimi, Bob Clark, Roseanne Katon, Brad Dourif. Reviews include Work is a Four Letter Word, Fly Me, Dorothy's Revenge, Outrage, Wolfpack.

**SC 24, \$6.** Q&A's with Lance Henriksen, Tom Noonan, Irvin Kershner, and Edmund Purdom. Reviews include Hot Tomorrows, Nothing Lasts Forever, Puzzle of a Downfall Child, Tha Lineup.

**SC 23, \$6.** Q&A's with Fred Ward, Bill McKinney, David Carradine, Iggy Kantor, Milton Moritz. Reviews include Dirty O'Neal, Son of Hitler, International Guerrillas, Model Shop, Foul's Fire.

**SC 22, \$6.** Q&A's with M. Emmet Walsh, Bradford Dillman, Michael Chapman, Nick Mancuso. Reviews: Together, Outback, My Best Friend's Birthday, Pepe, The Christian Licorice Shop.

**SC 21, \$6.** Interviews with Malcolm McDowell, Kurtwood Smith, Vilmos Zsigmond, and Oscar Williams. Reviews include Jim the World's Greatest, Hochatoga, Leo the Last, Stoned, Starcase.

**SC 20, \$6.** Interviews with Michael Moriarty, Keith David, Joe Turkel, Lee Frost, W.B. Richter. Reviews include Ice, Tha Dadem & Min-Killers, Deadhead Miles, Dully, I Start Counting.

**SC 19, \$6.** Q&A's with James Remar, Don Gordon, Lorenzo Semple Jr., Jared Martin. Reviews include Gorillas Go Beast, Demon Lover Diary, Inchon, Deafula, Is This Trip Really Necessary?

**SC 18, \$6.** Interviews with Victor Argo, Jesse Vint, Kinji Fukasaku. Reviews include Feldiae, Mondo Candito, A Cool Wind in August, Kenny & Company, Welcome Home Soldier Boys.

**SC 17, \$6.** Q&A's with Paul Morrissey, Eddie Dezen, Philip D'Antoni, Carol Speed. Reviews include Strangers in the City, Synanon, Pawns Before Swine, Perfect Friday, Avare Veniani.

**SC 16, \$6.** Q&A's with Julius W. Harris, Marilyn Joi, Sid Haig, Michael Campus. Reviews include Play It As I Lay, Zebra Kill, Ghostwatch, Of Freaks and Men, Jerry Lewis in The Jazz Singer.

**SC 15, \$6.** Interviews with Fred Williamson and Hugh Keays-Byrne. Reviews: The Milky Way, The Legend of Nigger Charley, The Story of Mankind, Brother Theodore Speaks, Street of Dreams.

**SHOCK CINEMA 14.** Paul Koslo, A.C. Stephen and Hajji. **SOLD OUT!**

**SC 13, \$6.** Interviews with Don Stroud and Russ Meyer. Reviews include Punishment Park, Who Are You Poly Magoo?, Pound, Dirty Weekend, The Slams, Bigfoot and Wildboy, Jag Mandr.

**SC 12, \$6.** Interview with William Smith. Reviews include The Werewolf of Woodstock, The Gong Show Movie, Evil Roy Slade, Cover Me Babe, Strawberries Need Rain, Alabama's Ghost.

**SC 11, \$6.** Reviews include Trans-Euro-Express, The Big Cube, The American Dreamer, Vigilante Force, You Are What You Eat, Charlotte, They Call Her One-Eye, Don't Worry Well I Think of a Title.

**SC 10, \$6.** Reviews include The Phynx, Kid Blue, Bike Boy, Burst City, Melinda, The Pusher, The Cool Ones, A Man Called Dagger, Pets, The Power, Mad Farms, The Monitors, Dallas Doll.

**SHOCK CINEMA 9. SOLD OUT!**

**SC 8, \$6.** Reviews include Let My Puppets Come, The Swinger, God's Angry Man, Pink Narcissus, The Candy Snatchers, Who Killed Teddy Bear?, My Hustler, Prelude to Happiness, Jabberwalk.

**SC 7, \$6.** Reviews include The Touchables, Beyond Love and Evil, Privileged, Fleming Creatures, Cool Breeze, Paganini, Son of Dracula, William Shatner in Alexander the Great, Lions Love.

**SC 6, \$5.** Reviews include Skidoo, Farewell Uncle Tom, The World's Greatest Sinner, The Chelsea Girls, Shelf Life, Vapors, Young Playthings, Choked Elbows, Fighting Mad, Monaco Forever.

**SHOCK CINEMA 1 through 5. SOLD OUT!**

# DVDementia

Though it was a theatrical dud when first released, 1989's **RED SCORPION** (*Synapse*) stands out from the usual '80s action schlock thanks to its savvy casting, picturesque scenery and laughably ham-handed "tuck Communism" jingoism. Post-**MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE**, Dolph Lundgren stars as walking tree-trunk Lt. Nikolai Rachevko, a Spetsnaz hotshot whose latest mission is to assassinate the rebel leader of a small African country currently under Soviet domination. Nikolai goes undercover as a disordly drunk, befriends anti-Russian folk while behind bars (including always-entertaining M. Emmet Walsh as a foul-mouthed American reporter), stages a pif break, then infiltrates the insurgents' base. But along the way, stoic Rachevko is affected by the indigenous people's desire for freedom. Will this "perfect killing machine" allow compassion to trump his thick-headed allegiance to Mother Russia? Any day message



is only fleeting though, since **RED SCORPION**'s primary goal is to kick ass and spew propaganda, as these evil Russians torch villages, commit atrocities and fly about in heavily-armed gunships. The script by Arne Olson (who, tellingly, later penned **MIIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS: THE MOVIE**) bogs down during its lumbering, Joseph Campbell-esque mid-section, as escaped Nikolai treks across the wilderness, bonds with a Bushman and has a personal epiphany — just in time to participate in the big Commie-slaughtering finale. This role wasn't a huge stretch for Lundgren, but he handles the hackneyed action well, with co-stars Brion James as a sadistic Soviet who approves of torture (which would technically make him a Neanderthal nowadays) and Carmen Argentino as a Cuban Colonel. Though often undercut by the script's leaden fight-wring agenda, it's fun, fast-paced B-movie hokum. The DVD/Blu-ray combo includes a commentary with director Joseph Zito (**MISSING IN ACTION**) and recent interviews with Dolph, makeup FX guru Tom Savini (who shares his behind-the-scenes home movies) and producer/television-anti-Communist/convicted-felon/overall-scumbag Jack Abramoff.

Writer-director Darren Ward's throwback to hard-boiled 1970's Eurocrime flicks **A DAY OF VIOLENCE** (MVD Visuals), is a startling British indie that revels in ballyhoo criminals, gunfights, sex, and (most or all) vicious, blood-soaked brutality. Mitchell Panker (Nick Rendell) is your typical sociopathic, low-end debt collector and one day, while torturing a drugged-out deadbeat (**CANNIBAL FEROX**'s Giovanni Lombardo Radice) who's late with his payment, discovers 100 Grand hidden in the guy's shithole flat. For Mitchell, it's a no-brainer — just sit the loser's throat and steal the cash — unaware that this money actually belongs to Boswell (Victor D. Thorn), the most depraved mobster in the whole damned city, who also happens to be Mitchell's brand new boss! How exactly do we know Boswell has anger management issues? Well, when he suspects one of

his henchies of skimming cash, he trusses him up and (in one of the film's most disgusting moments) graphically chops off his balls with garden shears! Ironically, Mitchell's first assignment is to help locate the missing money, with one incident after another going horribly wrong — leading to an innocent women's torture, a barroom massacre, Mitchell going on the run (with his battered face resembling a raw meatloaf), and an astronomical body count. Ward wrings a good deal of suspense from the fairly routine scenario. Rendell's everyman look reminded me of past crime-film paupers like **CALIBER**'s Gastone Moschin, while the script gives Mitchell just enough misguided decency to keep us invested in the dude's fate. Its believably grisly setting makes the violence all the more unnerving, and though often unrelentingly sadistic, it's also a damned fine tale of urban U.K. crime and punishment. DVD extras include an interview with Radice and 78 minutes of making-of featurettes.

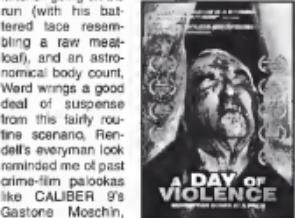
It's immediately obvious that the new sci-fi-fantasy no-budgeter, **FUTURE WORLD: CITY OF MASS DESTRUCTION** (*Chemical Burn*), was highly influenced by **HEAVY METAL**, with director Daniel Falick shooting his two actors against a makeshift green screen, adding digital backdrops, then running the whole shebang through a free video plug-in called "Cartoonit," which gives it a vaguely-retrospective appearance. Unfortunately, the end result more often looks like shit and is a tedious, headache-inducing mess... After four

atomic holocausts, the only remaining city in the year 30,000 A.D. is Grand Rapids, Michigan. Populated by a motley mix of humans, misfits and mutants, and controlled by a few tyrannical corporations, the viewer is tossed headfirst into several half-baked, tenuously-interconnected episodes involving female

warriors, slaughtered villagers, an arena death match, a grizzled ex-cop on a mission, an aged Emperor, egomaniacal villains, political power plays, the occasional monster, a pair of freaky couch-potato stoners, plus a scheme to hoard the remaining natural resources and save the rich and powerful when the planet's atmospheric fails. How does it all turn out? Frankly, I couldn't care less, since every aspect of this film is stunningly misguided. Instead of looking strange and exotic, it's merely an eyesore, the patchwork, cliché-riddled script keeps introducing more and more gratifying characters, despite its faux-animation veneer. The costumes, props and make-up never rise to the level of your average cosplay nerd; all

attempts at humor fall flat; and even the big battle scenes are numbingly dull. Although the enthusiasm of its cast and crew is certainly admirable, I can't imagine anyone outside of their small circle of friends being able to stomach this ugly, indulgent, long-winded, 127-minute-long(!) steaming pile. The disc includes a making-of short that gives you an idea of its preposterously-cheap budget.

Film anthologies are notoriously tricky endeavors, and even the best of 'em can be annoyingly inconsistent. **THE THEATRE BIZARRE** (*Image*) is no exception, as it rounds up some of today's most intriguing, under-appreciated indie directors, then unleashes them in short form and without any connecting theme... In Richard Stanley's "The Mother of Teads," a couple traveling through a remote region of France encounters a local witch (**THE BEYOND**'s Camilla MacColl). The guy stupidly gets stoned on witch's brew and has a disastrous morning after, while his better half is tormented by a slimy, Lovecraftian toad monster. Though highly atmospheric, it's also astoundingly silly... Buddy Giovinazzo's "I Love You" delivers a scaldingly intimate marital meltdown. In a Berlin apartment, a man (André Hennicke) awakens, bloodied on his bathroom floor, and recalls fragments of the previous night — his wife moving out, his own pleading, one final fuck — and anyone familiar with Buddy's work (e.g. **COMBAT SHOCK**) knows to expect a brutal denouement... A man suffers from repeated castration nightmares in Tom Savini's "Wet Dreams," with his overlapping dreams of marital infidelity (to wife Debbie Rochon) delivering gory imagery aplenty. The most mainstream horror entry of the bunch, it's also the cheesiest and most emotionally empty... In Douglas Buck's "The Accident," a confused little girl has a great many questions about death after witnessing a roadside fatality. At only 10 minutes, this is the shortest episode, but also the truest and most queasily unnerving... Karim Hussain's "Vison Stains" contains several queasy moments (thanks to hypodermic needles jabbed into eyeballs); as a female serial killer (Kamehiko Horn) steals key moments from the lives of women at the moment of their death, then chronicles their tragic experiences in her journals. It's a fascinating premise, but the overbearing style somewhat neuters its impact... Lastly, David Gregory's "Sweets" adds some pitch black humor to the mix, as a disgusting couple with a lecherous fondness for sweets separates — leading to a mix of stark emotions, absurd situations, spectre lar go, plus an appearance by Lynn Lowry (**THEY CAME FROM WITHIN**)... Let's not forget about Jeremy Kasten's eerie framing segments, in which a woman is the sole audience member for a theatre performance hosted by Udo Kier's mechanical man... Buddy and Buck take top honors in the wildly mixed bag, that's at its best when dissecting the darkest, most genuine crevasses of the human condition. Extras includes a directors' commentary, as well as interviews with Giovinazzo, Gregory and Kasten.



Rhode Island filmmaker Richard Griffin has been banging out low-budget features for over a decade, and this pair of cinematic send-ups — celebrating radically different time panods — begins with 2011's **THE DISCO EXORCIST** (*Wild Eye*), a hilariously schlocky horror-comedy with a terrific cast and loads of retro trappings. It's time for lava lamps, reel-to-reel tape players, bushy mustaches, and snortin' coke. Yes, it's 1979, kids. And when disco-playboy Rex Romanico (Michael Reed) puts his slick moves on a chick named Rita (Ruth Sullivan), he's unaware that this foxy one-night-stand is actually a green-eyed black magic priestess. So when Rex shifts his attention to adult film starlet Amoreena Jones (Sarah Nicklin), there'll soon be hell to pay, with the pair cursed by freaky, pentagram-writting Rite. Amoreena's workplace co-stars are soon transforming into demonic killers, and what's a poor guy to do when his girlfriend keeps turning into a possessed sex fiend? How about asking assistance from the disco's janitor, who happens to be an ex-priest exorcism expert? What could've easily been a one-joke dud is instead a rip-roaring dose of sex, skin, gore, sneeze, and twisted laughs, with Griffin nailing the old-school grindhouse look — from the tacky furnishings and wardrobe to its intentionally-weathered print. And while some might argue that the film's central disco looks more like a two-bit dump, I can personally attest to having hung out in even crappier nightclubs during the late-70s. High praise also goes out to the cast (many of them Griffin regulars), who fearlessly embrace anything the script dishes out, including a Vietnam-themed porno featuring topless women on roller skates and a disco orgy interrupted by zombies. Extras include deleted scenes and a commentary with Griffin, Nicklin and Reed. Another newly released effort from Richard and Griffin is 2010's **ATOMIC BRAIN INVASION** (*Camp Motion Pictures*), a comic-homage to 1950's sci-fi creature features, with the Earth once again under siege by pesky aliens and an assortment of small-town teenagers to the rescue. Sarah Nicklin stars as Eisenhower-era high schooler Betty Kimble, who's both a beauty and a braniac, with David Lavalie, Jr. as nerdy classmate Sherman and Michael Reed as a delinquent jack-off whose dad happens to be the General in charge of the military's nearby A-bomb testing. Their town's stuffy, blue-haired matrons are incensed when a sinful rock-n-roll singer named Elvis Presley is scheduled to perform locally, but they should be more concerned about the slime inside an alien projectile, which is infecting the populace and turning people into goofy, puppet-looking creatures with bare brains. When Betty and Sherman join a search party to locate some missing kids, it quickly leads to an extraterrestrial craft containing a trio of dozing humanoid space cheerleaders, some teenage puppy love, as

well as cinema's most unlikely Hispanic Elvis, who rocks out at a local diner during a peanut-butter-and-banana-sandwich pitstop. It's a cult enough concept, but the film doesn't kick into high gear until the final half-hour, with not-particularly-swift brain-monsters on the prowl. Elvis aiding the kids, plus some ridiculously silly twists. This sort of movie pastiche isn't a new idea, but the savvy script masterfully cobbles together every possible genre cliché and absurdity, along with a winning cast led by Nicklin's fast-talking, feisty heroine. The film never rises to the inspired insanity levels of **DISCO EXORCIST** (heck, this one is barely PG!), but it's still likeable, lightweight fun. The DVD includes a director-producer-cast commentary.

Over the years, the Michigan-lensed, 1988 schlock-fest **THOU SHALT NOT KILL... EXCEPT** (*Synapse*) has become an unequivocal cult favorite, with much of the credit belonging to director Jason Becker, who ingeniously stretched his three-dream budget while maximizing the cheap

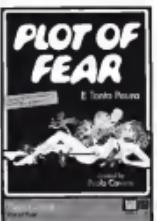
thrills, macho attitude and outlandish carnage. A Vietnam prologue introduces us to a band of badass Marines, led by Sergeant Stryker (Brian Schulz), but most of the flick takes place back in the States, when wounded Stryker returns home to his peaceful cottage, falls for a blonde

cutie and soon has his rural R&B interrupted when psychotic hippie burn-outs begin offing innocent townsfolk (including death by lawn dart). They're led by a Manson-esque "savior" played by future SPIDER-MAN director Sam Raimi (sporting a moth-eaten Rasta wig and mouthful of gnarly teeth), who brings the perfect combination of cosmetically-awful acting and ridiculous over-commitment to this creep. Stryker eventually reunites with his rowdy, hard-drinking combat buddies and it's time to go back to war, with such a gorefestively excessive death toll that you're liable to bust a gut. Though often spectacularly crude, the cast and crew's D.I.Y. amateur enthusiasm keeps it mindlessly enjoyable from beginning to end. The DVD/Blu-ray combo is also stuffed with cool extras, including a half-hour making-of documentary featuring new interviews with Becker, co-writer Scott Spiegel and Ted Raimi (who played "Chain Man"); Becker's 48-minute **STRYKER'S WAR** (1980), a Super-8, micro-budgeted take on the same story, except with 22-year-old Bruce Campbell as our war-winded Sarge; and two commentaries — one with star Brian Schulz, plus an amusingly self-deprecating track with Becker and Campbell (who couldn't appear in this non-union feature because he'd gotten his SAG card, but let Becker shoot many of the interiors in his garage). The two longtime friends laugh about the film's bubs (like how you can see the soldiers' icy Michigan-winter breath in the midst of Vietnam), point out recycled **EVIL DEAD** props and recall using both actual liquor and live ammo on-camera.

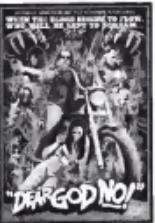
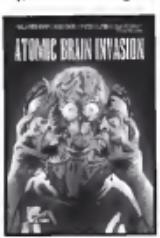
Yet another in the burgeoning trend of new exploitation features based on classic grindhouse genres, **DEAR GOD NO!** (*Big World Pictures*) puts an unapologetically tasteless and hilariously sick spin on the biker movie, packed with bloodshed, sadism, naked chicks, Pebbles Blue Ribbon, as well as the occasional monster. When we first meet The Impalers biker club, these rowdy hairballs have just finished raping and murdering (not necessarily in that order) a vanload of nuns, and

their recent anti-social behavior has become so extreme that it's actually pissin' off the other local criminals. Impalers' leader Jett (Jeff Bryant) simply want to be "free to bang life in the ass," and that includes gunning down cops, shopkeepers, children... in other words, pretty much anyone they choose. In addition to this biker mayhem-fest, there's crackpot anthropologist Dr. Marco (Paul McCloskey) and his oddball daughter (Madeline Brumby), who're studying a prehistoric mutation that has infected the area and is making the local wildlife go crazy. Oh, and they also have something locked in their basement! But just wait until The Impalers bust in and decide to throw themselves a party, unaware that there's a Bigfoot-like, hairy whatzit on the loose. The slim storyline is padded out to 81 minutes with gratuitous nudity (including topless strippers with machine guns and Richard Nixon masks), drug-induced hallucinations, outlandishly over-the-top gora effects, spot-on period trappings, and unñly facial hair. Plus every time you think the film couldn't get any nastier, writer-director James Anthony Blackert takes it a step further. Hell, this film even repulsed me a couple times, and just wait until you see how these bikers deal with a pregnant chick. Extras includes behind-the-scenes footage, two commentaries, promos, and a Red Band trailer.

Despite its ingathering international cast, 1976's **PLOT OF FEAR** (*E Tanta Paura*) (*Rare Video*) remains a fairly disposable Italian crime thriller. A mysterious murderer has already struck twice, killing two members of an exclusive Fauna Lovers Club — a perverse clique of ritzy "animal lovers" — and leaving children's book illustrations at the scene of each crime. Inspector Lomenzo (Michele Plascido, star of the '80s organized crime series *LA PIOMBA* [*The Octopus*]) is on the case, but even as more fresh corpses pile up (a woman burned alive, a hit-and-run, another gunned down on live TV), our busy detective still finds time to get dumped by his moronic girlfriend and quickly rebound with a sultry fashion model (YOR, *THE HUNTER FROM THE FUTURE's* Comme Cleary), who attended one of these Fauna



Club bacchanals at which a young whore named Rosa died. What specifically takes place at this club? In flashbacks, we see the group — men, women, plus a chimp (?) — lounging around those palatial villas, watching kinky cartoons and playing dirty party games. Meanwhile, Lomenzo's investigation eventually uncovers deadly secrets, additional crimes and unexpected culprits, with a pre-ALIEN Tom Skerritt in a thankless supporting role as a police colleague, Eli Wallach ferring slightly better as the wealthy head of a high-tech detective firm, and Cleary displaying some of the physical attributes that led to her casting in *THE STORY OF O*. The film's biggest weakness is its lackluster script, but director Paolo Cavara (*BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA*) tries his best to pump up



the proceedings with beautiful actresses and bare flesh, doesn't take any of it too seriously and occasionally mixes absurd humor with the killings. Alas, it only rarely rises above the routine. The DVD includes interviews with Plácido, writer Enrico Oldoni and the director's son, Pietro Cavarà.

A trio of sexy Swedish dramas have been bundled together for *Retro-Seduction Cinema's* 3-disc "Joe Sarno's Ingå Collection," an excellent intro to this erotic auteur's classic work... First up is one of Sarno's most popular efforts, 1967's *INGÅ*, starring 17-year-old blonde beauty Marie Ljedahl as our title teen virgin, whose sexuality is



awakened when she moves in with her Aunt after her mom's death. You see, 33-year-old Aunt Greta hides her age by hanging out with a hip young crowd and is nearly broke due to her 21-year-old, wannabe-writer boyfriend Karl. She initially convinces innocent Ingå to be the paid "companion" for a wealthy, much-older man, but complications ensue once Karl gets a hard-on for Greta's knockout niece. Behind the camera, Sarno takes the time to develop his characters, shoots the b&w film with finesse, works in plenty of gratuitous nudity, and caps it all off with a particularly downbeat ending. The sordid story may be a bit talky for viewers merely interested in flogging the bishop, but when first released, *INGÅ* set the bar for classy, high-end sexploitation. Extras include a 2001 audio interview with Ljedahl and a commentary with Sarno and his wife... Marie returned to the role that made her a star and Sarno upgraded to color stock for 1971's **THE SEDUCTION OF INGA**. But while this continuation of Ingå's sexual odyssey is larger in scope, it abandons the stark passion and realism of the first in favor of more typical sex-flick territory. It's three years later, with 19-year-old Ingå living on her own in Stockholm, but how exactly will this unimbioned, doe-eyed mix survive in the big city? (Hint: it involves leaping into bed with an assortment of men.) Ingå's adventures include perusing the groovy local nightife, attracting a sleazy-haired musician neighbor (Tommy Blom), discovering that her landlady hosts perverse sex parties, and working as an assistant for a lecherous middle-aged writer. If Ingå showed even a glimmer of an intriguing personality, we might give a damn, but she instead seems more vapid than ever — torn between different men, pisssing off other women and ultimately sunk by lovely Ljedahl's extremely limited acting range. The disc includes a 2002 featurette with Sarno and Marie, plus an alternate cut of the film with raunchier, mismatched inserts... The final film in this Sarno-palooza, 1969's **THE INDELICATE BALANCE**, lacks Ljedahl's presence, keeps its eroticism subdued and instead plumbs the damaged psyches of an isolated, dysfunctional (to put it mildly) family. Most of the story is set in and around a remote house in the snowy countryside, with artist Harald paying a visit to his kin for the first time in years and his concerned new wife Karin hoping that this trip will relieve hubbie's depression and creative block. Of course, she's never met manipulative mother Lena, who wants to destroy their marriage. Soon Herald is showing a tad too much affection towards mom and secretly groping sister Ingrid, yet is incapable of masking love to his increasingly-frustrated wife. As old incestuous desires and

new lesbian ones bubble to the surface, just wait until Karin discovers what's been transpiring in the locker studio. Less standard sexploitation than a kinky variation on early Strindberg's naturalism and psychological turmoil — complete with a Prokofiev and Shostakovich soundtrack, plus a title that pays homage to Edward Albee's Pulitzer-winning play, *A DELICATE BALANCE* — it's also the best film in the bunch. It includes a commentary by Peggy Sarno and film collector Gary Huggins (who provided the rare but worn-to-shit print).

**Impulse Pictures** continues to pump out sleazy new additions to their Nihilistic Erotic Films Collection, and 1977's *EROS SCHOOL: FEELS SO GOOD* (*Erosu Gakuen: Kondo Batsugun*) is one of their most mesogynistic and severely damaged conceits — a happy-go-lucky, coming-of-age comedy about Japanese schoolgirls and sexual rape. It begins like a typical teen sex-romp, with a high school boy named Yosizawa asleep in class and dreaming he's being seduced by topless class president Misa (Asami Ogawa), only to awaken and wind up humiliated (then again, being kicked and beaten by angry schoolgirls might not be considered a punishment by some guys). The females at this school are strong and confident, with one teacher remarking that someone should put them



all in their place. Enter Ryu (Muskun Shiohi), a disheveled creep who ogles these teenage girls from afar and transfers into their school (accompanied by his pet pig). If this were an American film, the character would be played by someone like Rob Schneider — except for the fact that Ryu is also an unrepentant rapist!

Soon this guy is attacking one schoolgirl after another, and although his victims initially resist, Ryu's sexual prowess quickly wins them over (since rape is obviously just another form of foreplay, right?), with Misa as his ultimate target. Ryu's behavior even rubs off on the blue-balled schoolboys, who decide that they too should have the freedom to screw anybody they want. Meanwhile, poor Yosizawa ends up getting the most twisted revenge of all. Director Kurahara Kotatsu's faces Ryu's raping spree with incongruous comedy (like a teacher who stumbles upon an attack, but is too flustered and inept to do anything helpful), "humorous" sound effects and, of course, nubile nudity aplenty. The end result is so unfathomably wrongheaded that it puts any US exploitation to shame.

It's a steamy summer in suburbia and deviant passions are ready to boil over in the 1961 b&w melodrama *LOOK IN ANY WINDOW* (*Alpha Home Entertainment*), a wonderfully tawdry portrait of middle-class immorality awash in rampant adultery, alcoholism, troubled teens, and shitty parenting. 19-year-old pop idol Paul Anka (hot off of chart-toppers like "Diana" and "Lonely Boy") stars as Craig Fowler, a disturbed kid who deals with his drunken father (Alex Nicol), slutty mother (Ruth Roman) and constant bullying in the customary fashion — by becoming a masked, rooftop peeping tom and panicking the entire neighborhood! When we aren't following perky pipsqueak Craig, it's bickering couples and their extramarital hook-ups, plus a pair of plainclothes cops who get an eyeful of the non-stop lust and intrigue while on stake-out for this mystery sleazebag. It all culminates at a July 4th pool party, where hormones rise, tempers flare and our voyeur is cornered

Exposing the sleazy underbelly of this perfect suburban lifestyle, director William Alland pours the exploitation on extra thick, while Anka broods like a constipated, 5th-rate James Dean and warbles the creepy little tune. Co-stars include George Dolenz (father of MONKEES-drummer Micky Dolenz) as an Italian loafie who recently moved onto the block. Jack Cassidy (*PARTY RIDGE* / *FAMILY* heartthrob David Cassidy's dad) is an ascot-wearing philanderer who takes Craig's mom on a Vegas overnighter, and Gigi Perreau (who also co-starred with Anka in *GIRLS TOWN*) plays a next-door-cutie freaked

out by Craig's clumsy seduction technique. DVD extras include a 41-minute interview with Alland (who died in 1997), discussing his work with Orson Welles, producing features like *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE* and how he was created out of the cash from this sole directing gig, as well as a brief featurette about how Alland's snatched on colleagues as a "friendly witness" before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Providing Warhol stud-muffin Joe D'Ellesandro with yet another Eurotrash paycheck, the 1980 Italian crime drama *MADNESS* (*Vacanze Per un Massacro*) (*Ram Video*) from usually-reliable director Fernando Di Leo (*TO BE TWENTY*) suffers from a limp script, scattershot performances and a threadbare production, but even sub-par Di Leo is sure to have one or two amusingly cynical kinks along the way. D'Ellesandro stars as sadistic prison escapee Joe Brezza, who slaughters a couple innocents in the opening minutes, steals their jalopy and ends up at a secluded house in the countryside. The current owners are wealthy married couple Sergio and Liliana, accompanied by Lorraine DeSelle as the wife's sister Paola (who's secretly fucking her brother-in-law), and our muscle-shirted fugitive

soon makes himself an unwanted guest. You see, Joe's pitstop at this particular house is no accident, because he stashed a stolen fortune here before his trip to the hoosegow. From there on, it's a four-character chamber piece awash in sexual mindgames and manipulation — from slutty Paola (who masturbates in the nude on the living room couch, under a huge poster of a young John Travolta) hoping to use sex to get the upper hand, to Joe forcing Sergio and Paola to screw in front of Liliana — but there's barely any story here, and is more often just a pretense for some bare flesh and abusive behavior. Never as violent or deranged as its situation suggests, the script lacks much common sense and Joe obviously isn't the swiftest sociopath, since he never realizes that he could just kill this annoying trio and go about his business. Still, D'Ellesandro makes this callous slob unpredictably amusing at times, such as when he forces Paola to toil at manual labor while he bittishly snacks on his lunch, and ultimately saves this lightweight lark from being entirely forgettable.



Fernando Di Leo

## UNDER GROUND

# ODDITIES

**FOXFUR** ([www.facebook.com/PackardFilm](http://www.facebook.com/PackardFilm)) (2012). Reviewing a new film by writer-director Damon Packard is always a uniquely daunting experience. With their unfathomable narrative shifts, it often feels like trying to decipher some deliriously cryptic, inexplicably hilarious alien language. *Continuity?* Fuck it! Simple logic? Unnecessary! And this hour-long excursion into Packard's DIY sensibilities is no exception. In various fragmented episodes, we meet a young woman named Foxfur — though to be more precise, it's several women, since the actress playing her often changes from one scene to the next, as noted by the film's Packard-surrogate, Kris Kneifel. Foxfur is heavily into conspiracy theories, but slowly has her reality shaken during a trek to the New Agey (now defunct) Bhodi Tree Bookstore, amidst crackpot scientists, hovering UFOs, trippy public transportation, gratuitous cats, killer dolphins, beer-swilling blowhards, incompetent hardware and toy store employees, plus actors popping up as longtime-wackos like Richard Hoagland, David Icke and Bob Lazar. When Kris inexplicably commits suicide and Foxfur is kicked out of her apartment, it's total freak-out time! One minute we're following Foxfur, the next it's some gal roaming Los Angeles with a bow and arrow, dressed for Comic-Con. And what the hell are those inky streaks floating across the sky? While we're at it, why not time travel back to 1982 and toss in some cheap Ewok knock-offs, references to the cheap-ass TV-show WIZARDS AND WARRIORS and a couple sexy elves? Don't forget to sprinkle it all with disorienting vision and sound effects. Still not enough for you? Foxfur eventually runs into blonde, extraterrestrial Plejaren chicks named Semjase and Askel, based on UFO-nutjob Billy Meier's (supposed) outer-space contacts... Filmed over a two-year period — hence the ever-shifting cast members (with Paris Noelle Wagner and Cassie Yeager as Foxfur standouts) — this might be slightly more linear than some of Packard's previous efforts, but it's still a baffling, stream-of-consciousness mindfuck. Often wonderfully absurd, at other times, headache-inducingly unengaged, I look forward to seeing whatever the hell Packard has in store for us next.

**AMBER ROSE** (Shut Up & Do It Productions) (2011). This deceptively simple indie feature from writer-director Mike Trippiedi begins as a sunny, small-scale drama, only to take a radical shift into some exceedingly troubling (and, alas, all too believable) territory, as a well-intentioned little girl encounters genuine evil. Zoe Capps plays Amber Rose, a precocious 11-year-old who lives with her single mom (Carolyn Kodas-Atkinson) and is curious about their new next-door neighbors, despite the fact that Judy (Amy Stock, who played BILL AND TED's sexy stepmom two decades ago) is so defensive about her

accident-damaged, "brain ain't right" older brother Skip (Steven M. Keen). But stubborn Amber Rose is determined to dedicate her time to befriending slow-witted Skip and reading to him, despite his protective sister's protests. So what's Judy worried about? A secret lurks in Skip's past involving a woman's death, which he occasionally babbles incoherently about. Finally, bringing this pot to a boil is Gil (Joe Dempsey), who has a connection to Skip's fateful accident and soon begins romancing Amber Rose's mom. As one lie after another piles on, the story careers into darker-than-anticipated topics, but always with unexpected nuance and humanity. Unlike most child actors, Capps gives an unaffected and likeable performance, while Keen has the most delicate role — Skip looks like your standard, craggy tough guy, and though now reduced to an almost childlike personality, is incapable of repressing old desires. Meanwhile, Trippiedi's perceptive dialogue brings depth to these varied characters, with his slow-burn approach to this touchy subject matter packing an even bigger punch at the very end.



**MIMESIS** (2011). A lot of effort obviously went into this indie horror feature by director Douglas Schulze, but while its core idea might've worked as a half-hour TV-episode — back in the 1980's, that is — as a 97-minute movie, it becomes a dull, repetitive slog... A bunch of fans at a horror convention, including nerdy Russell and his buddy Duane (Allen Maldonado), who's just there scope for chicks, receive invitations to an exclusive shindig from a smokin' goth chick (Lauren Mae Shafer). But when all of these partygoers awaken the next morning, the gang is in for a rude surprise. They're all trapped in a real-life version of George Romero's NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, complete with the opening graveyard, central farmhouse as shelter from the undead, and a cellar full of oddly-confused folks. No one knows what the hell is going on, how they got dressed in 1960's clothes, or why only three or four pitiful zombies are shuffling about outdoors... There's a glimmer of a clever idea here, so I'll give 'em credit for that, but everything else about this horror homage falls short. The pacing legs, it relies on fake jump-scares, we don't care remotely about these people, and unlike Romero's classic — which it repeatedly, tresomely references — this doesn't contain a fraction of the wit, talent, scares, or suspense. I kept waiting for some truly clever twist to justify the giddy set-up, but it never came, with Schulze instead taking every amateurish wrong turn. It's competently shot, with good but unimaginative gore, plus Set Helg makes a brief convention appearance in the opening minutes and Courtney Gaines (CHILDREN OF THE CORN leader Maizah) plays a prologue farmer, but they contribute little to this horror circle jerk except for promotional value

### STEVE RAILSBACK Cont. from PAGE 33

for three hours. We talked about high school. We talked about a girlfriend that he wanted to be with named Betsy. We talked about everything. I met with everybody — not for three hours each though. Theresa [Russell]. I've known since she was 16. A phenomenal actress.

And it was also a lot of fun because I love actors. Most directors talk in generalities. But since I'm an actor, I know how to talk to actors. I'm not a block away looking at a video machine, I'm right next to the camera, because I want to look in the performers' eyes. And if they need something, I'll walk up and whisper something to them. I don't remember what the scene was, but I recall walking up to Scott and saying, "Betsy." [Laughs]

### SC: Let's talk a little about your family.

Railsback: I have a lovely wife named Marci, and we have three great kids: a 28-year-old daughter from a prior marriage named Lesha; a 20-year-old

son named Beau, who's starting his second year at U of A [University of Arizona]; and a 13-year-old daughter named Eden. She's more mature than I am. Seriously. Not that I'm not mature to begin with. [Laughs] But Marci and I will have an argument, and Eden will stand there after Marci walks out of the room, and she'll tap her foot and say, "Okay, what happened, Dad? Tell me. I want to know." [Laughs]

### SC: How long have you been teaching?

Railsback: About a year-and-a-half — and I love it. As I say, I have 10 students altogether, and everybody works, not at the same time necessarily, but everybody works. I don't have a watch, so we might go until 2 o'clock in the morning. And when I see one of my students break down a wall, I get more excited than they do because they took a chance. I'll applaud anybody falling on their face because at least they took the chance to fall on their face. Does that make sense?

### SC: Absolutely.

Railsback: I mean, it's easy not to take chances, because then you don't have to worry about somebody disliking you or whatever. The point is, take the chance, because if you don't fly off the cliff, what's the point? If you fall on your face, so what? I've fallen on my face many times. Get back up on your feet, because you can't let other people ruin your life. You can't let what you think they think or the voices in your head tell you what to do. Get up off your face or off of that couch and force yourself to take that chance. Make strong choices.

I'm not just talking about acting, either. I'm talking about anything in life. Take the chance. Walk into the unknown. Follow your dreams, whatever they are. Ω

To find out more about Steve, his classes, his career, and future projects, blast on over to [SteveRailsbackActor.com](http://SteveRailsbackActor.com). Thanks to Philip Sanguinet!

**CONSPIRACY CINEMA:** Propaganda, Politics and Paranoia by David Ray Carter (\$19.95; Headpress, [www.worldheadpress.com](http://www.worldheadpress.com)) Conspiracy theories and films devoted to them are nothing particularly new, but the era of the internet and DIY-moviemaking transformed this fringe genre into a cottage industry for hardcore skeptics. David Ray Carter's fascinating (and occasionally scary) new book delves deep into this eerily-ridiculed world of conspiracy cinema, but instead of simply chalking them up as the work of tinfoil-hatted crackpots, he keeps an open mind and critiques these films in terms of their entertainment value and argumentative methodology. No surprise, 9/11 fills a sizable hunk of the book (Was it an inside job by the Bush administration as a pretext for war? Was Israel involved? Or were the Twin Towers destroyed in a ritual to create a dimensional gateway?), with other topics including the assassinations of J.F.K. and Martin Luther King Jr., the Oklahoma City bombing, the siege at Waco, global warming, the faked moon landing, rigged Diebold voting machines, Vince Foster's death, Obama's birth certificate, the Tea Party's wealthy puppetmasters, as well as vast New World

David Ray Carter

**Conspiracy Cinema**

Propaganda, politics and paranoia



Order conspiracies involving the Illuminati, Freemasons and even the Federal Reserve. Covering everything from theatrical releases like EXECUTIVE ACTION and THE LINCOLN CONSPIRACY to crude, homemade, multi-hour documentaries, Carter's catalog of rampant paranoia is an enlightening, exhaustingly thorough compendium of one of the most unbalanced niches of modern cinema.

**HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN:** An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films by Kier-La Janisse (\$29.95; FAB Press; [www.fabpress.com](http://www.fabpress.com)) Disturbed women have been the centerpiece of some wonderfully treaky and unsettling films, and this beautiful new book by Kier-La Janisse covers the finest examples of on-screen female neurosis. Focusing primarily on horror and exploitation fare, topics include revenge-rapes (MS. 45), dopelgangers (THREE WOMEN), father-fixations (Peter Whitehead's DADDY), alienated teens (OUT OF THE BLUE), and much more, with the author championing many underappreciated films in the process (Douglas Buck's CUTTING MOMENTS, Andrzej Zulawski's POSSESSION, Jane Arden's THE OTHER SIDE OF THE UNDERNEATH). In addition to 32 color pages, over one-third of the

# SHOCKING BOOKS

book is devoted to A-Z reviews of the most important films within this demented genre — everything from BLACK NARCISSUS to THE RAPTURE. But what separates this from your usual cinematic reference guide is how Janisse utilizes these films as a springboard to discuss her own psychological problems, disclose intimate stories of her youth and explain the impact specific films had on the author during pivotal times in her life. Taking us on a tour of her severely fucked-up family, verbal and physical abuse, traumatic events, assorted compulsions, institutionalization, juvenile delinquency and more, this risky, self-involved approach might test the patience of unprepared readers, but it ultimately succeeds thanks to Janisse's brutal honesty and insight, as she examines these powerful films while stripping away the layers of her troubled past.

**DOG DAYS:** Volume One by Gene Gregorits (\$16.00; Monstrell Books). The latest literary offering from Gene Gregorits — brainchild behind the incredible fringe-culture journal SEX AND GUTS — is a blistering "anti-memoir" chronicling his down-in-the-dirty life in Baltimore and beyond.

Gregorits pulls no punches, and if you're looking for a strong plot or personal growth, forget it! This is an unapologetic, acid-tongued slice of life steeped in alcohol, self-mutilation, barhopping, shithole apartments, contemplations of violence, and no shortage of pleasure decisions. Lovers range from Lolita-esque frat girl Sarah to "disgusting whore of a pig" Isabella, while Gene's misadventures include getting dangerously close to Isabella's rich relatives on Xmas Eve, memories of a broken marriage and eventually moving back to his hometown of Harrisburg, PA. Gregorits' misanthropic attitude



might make Bukowski look like Mr. Rogers, but as ugly as the author paints everyone else in his life, he wisely saves the most vicious self-loathing for himself. It's a portrait of the artist as a self-serving fuck-up who's always broke, rarely sober, screws any woman who'll spread her thighs, and is slowly dragging his scared, middle-aged carcass into the abyss — while Gene's sole moments of recognizable humanity are lavished on his two cats: the murdered, long-beloved Hank and unpredictably vicious Sam. At 176 pages, DOG DAYS is a fast read, with Gregorits' relentlessly-vivid writing style sucking you into his chaotic life. It's painful,awkward, caustically funny, and unflinchingly honest.

**FATAL VISIONS:** The Wonder Years 1988-89 edited by Michael Helms ([members.iinet.net.au/~monstro/](http://members.iinet.net.au/~monstro/)). In the late 1980's, Michael Helms' Melbourne-based FATAL VISIONS was one of my favorite zines. Delving into the (pre-internet) world of Australian trash cinema, the mag offered up strong opinions, a wicked sense of humor and a taste for the eclectic, and now the first six issues of this seminal DIY publication have been compiled into a 248-page best from the past. A majority of this book is devoted to reviews of 'new' theatrical and home video releases — mainstream fodder like RAMBO III, and Tim Burton's BATMAN, various cult gems (LIQUID SKY, GHOSTS... OF THE CIVIL DEAD, NEAR DARK, Australian flicks, direct-to-video sludge, Hong Kong cinema (years before the genre was embraced by film geeks around the globe), plus loads of obscure, low-rent exploitation (SONG OF THE SUCUBUS, Craig Dennis' THE ASTROLOGER, VOODOO BLACK EXORCIST). Along with a sprinkling of newspaper ad mats, Helms and his roster of contributors also deliver some diverse, highly entertaining articles, including interviews with Herschell Gordon Lewis and local filmmaker Marc Savage, a glimpse into Australian film censorship, a first-hand account of the Fiji moviegoing experience, penning quirky porn novels, plus trips to Melbourne's adult theaters. Great stuff!



## MAGS, ZINES and SMALL-PRESS PUBLICATIONS

**LIQUID CHEESE #33** (8123 West Margaret Lane, Franklin, WI 53132; \$5 each, payable to Dave Koenike). This old-school 'zine aimed at "Movies & Music to Mangle Your Mind" just keeps growing! Packed with unabashed enthusiasm, this 50-page edition includes Dave's latest voyage to the Cinema Wasteland convention and a screening of *Dear God No!*, artist Donald England, Disgusting Comics, the Midwest Gaming Classic, the premiere installment of "Dave's Old VHS" (in which he randomly digs through a box of tapes from the 1980's), plus over 15 pages of movie reviews. Add'l info: [dkosanek@aol.com](mailto:dkosanek@aol.com).

**LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS #29** (Richard Klemansen, 3213 48th Place, Des Moines, IA 50310; \$9.95 + \$3 postage). The newest 108-page edition of this incredible magazine delivers "The Definitive Dr. Phibes," a tribute to one of Vincent Price's most beloved characters. This exhaustively-in-depth excursion into *The Abominable Dr. Phibes*, as well as its sequel, kicks off with comments by Frank Darabont and Tim Burton, includes articles on Virginia North, Fiona Lewis and Robert Quarry, and is overstuffed with cool insights and information. Highly recommended! [[www.littleshoppeofhorrors.com](http://www.littleshoppeofhorrors.com)]

**SCREEM #24** (41 Meyer Street, Wilkes Barre, PA 18702; \$7.95 + \$2.50 postage each; \$32 for a 4-issue sub). The newest edition of Darryl Mayasik's long-running mag is packed with an impressive array of horror/exploitation/cult cinema topics. Johnny Legend remembers the great Doodles Weaver, Tom Weaver interviews Black Zoo's Jeanne Cooper, Ted A. Bohus recalls *The Deadly Spasm*, plus articles on ventriloquist dummy flicks, actress Francoise Pascal, Andy Milligan's *Nightbirds*, mainstream fare like *Prometheus* and *Dark Shadows*, and loads of informative reviews [[www.screemag.com](http://www.screemag.com)]

**IAN OGILVY** Continued from PAGE 37

Bob Baker that I would be directing some of them. Roger Moore, for instance, got himself part of the company. In fact, Roger made money out of my TV series. That would have happened to me eventually. I would have gotten more influence and had more say in things and more power. But essentially, I was really only just an employee.

**SC:** Around this time, was there talk about you becoming the next Bond? Or has that become somewhat apocryphal?

Ogilvy: It has to some degree. But at one point during the height of this speculation, I was having lunch out in the country with some people, and there was an American there, whose name I can't remember, who was part of the publicity team of ION Productions, the company which produces the Bond movies. And he said, "I'd like to have a word with you." So he took me aside and said, "I'm probably going to be speaking out of turn, but I think this is fair. You've obviously been considered. But the truth of the matter is that, if we wanted another Roger Moore, we'd have you. But we don't want another Roger Moore. We want another Sean Connery."

So I knew quite early on that I wasn't going to be a Bond, and it was actually huge relief because I didn't think I really pulled off The Saint. And I didn't think I could pull off being Bond. I didn't have the weight for it. You need to be craggier than I was.

Anyhow, when I finished RETURN OF THE SAINT, British TV producers thought I was typecast, even though the general public welcomed me. So I went back to the theatre, and thank God they were happy to have me.

**SC:** And you moved to America —

Ogilvy: In 1989, working solidly for about 10 years until reality television really started taking over. And then I just stopped — and that happened almost overnight. I won't tell you any names, but I

have contemporary American actor-friends, quite well known in their time, who are really struggling. I was one of the lucky ones because around the time that I stopped working as an actor, I discovered that I was also a writer.

**SC:** Before getting into your children's books, tell us something about your strange role in DEATH BECOMES HER (1992).

Ogilvy: I play gay Eurotrash in that one. I was actually surprised to get the role because I wasn't working in big movies then. I was doing episodic stuff like MURDER SHE WROTE and MURPHY BROWN. It was a very nice cameo. While we're shooting the scene I have with Meryl Streep early on in the movie, I asked her, "Would you mind if I touched your hair?" And she said, "Jan, this is your scene. I just react to you. Do whatever you'd like," which was very generous of her. Very nice lady. And when I did the big ballroom scene, she said, "Jan! Come over here! Come and meet Goldie [Hawn] and Bruce [Willis]!"

**SC:** And how did you get started writing children's books?

Ogilvy: My American stepsons were growing up here in California, and we used to read aloud to them. And there was a whole period of very boring children's literature. Everything was wordy and had a fucking moral to it. It was all about Native-American chieftains dying in their wigwams while the snow fell and the walls howled... Really boring. I wanted to write rip-roaring stories where, at the end of each chapter, the kids go, "Come on! What happens next?"

And about halfway through writing my first book, I heard about the Harry Potter phenomenon by this woman writer and thought, "I must not read her." So I finished my book, read her book, and there are some similarities in terms of wizards and things like that. On the other hand, my young hero Measle has no magical powers at all. Harry does. That's the main difference.

**O-LAN JONES** Continued from PAGE 40

These women would sign up for the honor of being immured — walled into a room for their whole life. They would have one window on the church and one window on the outside world. I heard about this practice in a radio interview. It just gave me the chills. It seems like it is so fraught with metaphor. It's like, 'here we are, we're walled in, we're here for the duration. You've got

one window on the ordinary, and one window on whatever could be called sacred, and where do you go?' It's not a one woman show at all. There's a 30-voice choir, there's a 10-piece orchestra.

Do you know Medieval music at all? It's sort of like Gregorian chanting, but there's something really stark about it. There are all these notes that really rub against each other, it's not like it was all lutes and fiddle-roll-de-rolly. There's something so

**SC:** You've been married for quite some time, right?

Ogilvy: To my first wife, not so long: about 10 or 11 years. To my second wife, Kitty, for 22 years now. She's terrific. She used to be an actress, previously married to Bruce Boxleitner, and she retired when she had children. Kitty was on a long-running TV-show called HOW THE WEST WAS WON with Bruce, and on a show called SKAG. She's also been in a number of movies.

**SC:** Looking back, do you have any favorite Ian Ogilvy movies?

Ogilvy: Probably WITCHFINDER GENERAL because it became, for movie buffs, such an iconic movie, and it's the one for which I'm most remembered because, let's face it, I've made some shit films. [laughs] WITCHFINDER GENERAL wasn't always fun, though. I broke my foot halfway through it.

Wendy, I think the most fun I've ever had making a movie was on MY LIFE IN RUINS (2009) because the ambition had gone. I just enjoyed being on a movie set, being around some great people, being somewhere exotic like Greece, and being paid a lot of money for doing very little.

I have to say that actors are lazy. I know that I am. Currently, I'm writing an autobiography and directing a play. That's not really hard work.

**SC:** Can people contact you through any of your websites?

Ogilvy: They can, through MeasleBooks.com, which is where I currently receive a large part of my fan mail.

**SC:** I bet there's a lot of great pictures in your autobiography.

Ogilvy: Yes. I collected a lot of stuff. And I shall include pictures of Candice Bergen and me in our ridiculous costumes from THE DAY THE FISH CAME OUT. [laughs] Whether she likes them or not, they're going in the book. ♦

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